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THE SKY IS RED





# THE SKY IS RED

*A book about revolution  
and religion*

By JEAN S. MILNER

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TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER WHOSE  
FUNDAMENTAL FAITH STILL LIVES  
IN MY MODERN HEART





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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
EVENING	13

### BOOK ONE: YESTERDAY

#### AN ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF OUR INHERITED FAITH

I	THE OLDER ROLLS OF PARCHMENT	23
II	THE LATER ROLLS OF PARCHMENT	76
III	HOW DEPENDABLE ARE THESE DOCUMENTS?	120
IV	WHAT WAS THE RELIGION OF JESUS?	136
V	WHAT HAPPENED TO THE RELIGION OF JESUS?	175

### BOOK TWO: TODAY

#### A SURVEY OF WORLD ISSUES CHRISTIANITY FACES TODAY

VI	THE WORLD WE REALLY LIVE IN	207
VII	THE ISSUE OF BELIEF	213
VIII	THE ISSUE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE	231
IX	CHRISTIANITY AND WAR	265
X	THE UNION OF PROTESTANTISM	287
XI	TRENDS OF OUR TIME	300



THE SKY IS RED

He answered and said unto them, when it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather: for the sky is red. . . . ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

—From the Gospel According to Matthew.

# THE SKY IS RED

## EVENING

IT IS late on a cold winter afternoon. A white blanket of snow, a bit blackened by city soot and grime, lies softly over everything in the out-of-doors. The windows of my study look out across University Square, an open park near the heart of downtown Indianapolis. My study is in the old manse of this Indianapolis church. The manse has been converted into a parish house with offices for our church staff. Next door to this building is the church. It is old. It is historic. Nearly one hundred years ago Henry Ward Beecher was the minister of this congregation. From this people, whom he served for eight years, he went to Brooklyn and to world fame. Our church possesses a few treasured relics of Beecher's day. We have the old minute books of the Session meetings. The faded yellowed pages of these books speak of other days when issues quite different from those which now engage us were to the fore in men's minds. This congregation which I have served for nearly fourteen years has made my days here days of happiness.

Looking out of my study window I notice the street lamps are being turned on. They make patches of light and cast shadows in the winter dusk. The last red glow of the setting sun tinges the sky, vainly trying to hold back the darkness of night that is falling over the city. Long lines of automobiles are moving in the streets. The shadowed figures of people are hurrying along the pavements. Beyond the park are tall office buildings whose myriad windows stand out with sparkling brightness against the night. This church, a beautiful old Gothic of gray time-stained walls, stands in the midst of this

busy downtown scene, with its tall spire pointing upward, as if to remind these passing throngs that there is a Something, further on and higher up.

The chimes are striking the hour in the church tower. Presently our gifted blind organist, Charles Hansen, will sit at a keyboard over in the deep-shadowed auditorium and play upon the chimes high in the church tower some old familiar hymn of our faith. This is his custom at the close of each day. He has served this church for nearly forty years. Living in a world of darkness he has yet brought a great light and beauty to us all. His music heard at dusk across this rushing downtown scene, calls some, I suppose, among these passing throngs, back to old and simple and lovely things. From my study window I sometimes see people pause for a moment in the street and listen to the music of the chimes.

Mine is a beautiful study, a gracious gift of two very thoughtful people in my congregation. An open-grate fire is burning on the hearth and is casting its flickering lights and shadows across the long high rows of bookcases standing with somber dignity along the walls. Books are, to be sure, but pale copies and reflections of reality itself. If one is to know reality one must mix in and be a vital part of the every-day practicality of the on-goings and doings of our real world. But this world of books says things no informed person dare ignore. They give one an inspiring companionship with the thoughts of the greatest among the living and among the immortal dead. The thinking of the philosophers from the ancient days of Greece to the latest and most modernistic of the cynical thinkers of today; the weaving of words into shapes and forms of beauty in the exalting literature of both the ancient and modern world—all these things are on these shelves.

There are rows, too, of books on history which tell the story of the human adventure. Reading these books I have witnessed the marching of armies, with pennants flying, horses prancing, weapons gleaming in the sun, from the days of the ancient



Egyptians up through the last and greatest catastrophe of them all, the World War. I have watched siege-engines and battering-rams make a breach in the walls of ancient cities. I have seen Rome in flames. I have heard the screams of men dying in agony in battles whose issues we have long since forgotten. The perishing of old institutions and the rise of new ones; man's struggle to gain dominion over the earth and over himself; to secure in his arts beauty, in his religions a great assurance, and in his political and economic institutions stability and plenty—all these things I have witnessed and thrilled to, been a living part of, here in my study, not as dry-as-dust names and dates but as living flaming flashes of the human spirit a-march across the long fields of time.

But it is not of the past I am thinking. My thoughts are upon the present, this strange, new and exciting world in which we are now living and in which tremendous things are happening. We face colossal world problems which demand for their solution a disciplined intelligence and a great light which only a great religious faith can bring. The Protestant Christian Church, of all denominations, is handicapped in meeting the challenge which confronts us. Our forces are pathetically divided and so much of our thinking is confused by the categories of thought of times medieval in which our inherited creedal concepts of belief were given tendencies which still survive among us. Our inherited faith has not yet adjusted itself to the ways of thinking of the modern mind.

In too many places we are attempting to do an impossible thing—present a medieval system of thought and belief to a modern world. We must rationalize our faith or our children will have no faith. The issue of belief in our day has passed far beyond discussions having to do with literal Biblical infallibilities, miracles, modes of baptism, the validity of different methods of ministerial ordination and the like. We face today the basic issues of faith in life and in God. The deep questions are once more upon us. Ours is an age dominated by cynicism

and rapidly surrendering to disillusionment. Men are wondering about God. Is there a God or is God but the imaginary shadow of a magnified projection of our self against the immensity of the sky? Do we live our life amid a Vast Indifference or is the universe on the side of Goodness? What is life all about? What is man? Is he nothing—that came from nothing, that means nothing and that is moving toward nothing, or is man a something-else? These questions with their deeply intellectual implications are probably never to the fore in the thinking of our day except with a small minority of the more philosophically inclined. But the negative answers to these questions characterize the literature and drama of our age and are unconsciously subscribed to by unnumbered millions of people in all walks of life. Ancient sanctions and idealisms are rapidly going out from under us. The truth is, Western civilization has been slowly losing its religious faith across several decades. An undramatic catastrophe has been happening for some time to all churches. There has been a slow alienation of millions of thoughtful and better educated people who have the feeling that the Christian Church, in its thinking, is back somewhere in the Dark Ages and has no real light or leadership to bring to the life of our times.

A group of leading American clergymen, educators and others, recently issued in the public press "A Humanist Manifesto" in which we are told we must abandon belief in any kind of God. "Though we consider the religious forms and ideas of our fathers no longer adequate, the quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement. He must set intelligence and will to the task." This "Humanist Manifesto" (only a small part of which is quoted), is signed by several nationally known Unitarian clergymen and Dr. John Dewey, of Columbia University, is among the prominent educators whose names appear as sponsors.

It is a strange chaotic world in which modern man is living his life; revolution everywhere in his thinking and in his social structures. The ancient foundations seem to be crumbling. In the meantime modern jazz, gin and whoop-em-up, in which millions of baffled and cynically disillusioned modern men and women are trying to find a little fun in life, and, if possible, a little forgetfulness of its appalling emptiness, goes on a-pace. The cynical pessimists tell us we are the generation who were born too late. We were caught in the great catastrophe. The flame of World War seared our souls and its devastating aftermath has shattered our world. One recalls Gertrude Stein's bitter remark to Hemingway—that ours is a lost generation. This is the black mood of many.

Those who love the Christian Church and are still loyal to our rich religious heritage cannot look with indifference upon the chaotic conditions and confused thinking of our time. For how much of this situation is the Christian Church to be blamed? Christ's words fall with challenging significance upon us, "He answered and said unto them, when it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather: for the sky is red. . . . ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" There are things the Church must do that she may more adequately meet the imperatives of our day. Our ancient fundamentals of faith are as true today as they ever were, but these things need to be restated in the language and thought of our times. There are two groups within our Protestant churches who are supposed to be in heated disagreement with each other. Such is not the case. The overwhelming majority of our fundamentalists and liberals could be brought to a complete agreement upon the basis of a restatement of our faith if we would cease to suppress the frank and open discussion of our fundamental beliefs. Extreme fundamentalism is impossible. Extreme liberalism is dead. Liberalism, quite unintentionally, has been in danger of completely destroying our inherited faith.

The seriousness of the situation the Protestant Church faces

is brought home to us when we face the actualities of our contemporary world. We are living in the midst of a vast shifting of historic forces. The old order of things is passing. An era has ended and we cannot call it back. We face a world which in so many ways is being destroyed that a new and better world may be built. A tremendous task confronts the Protestant Church. This task will be made easier if our laity become better informed regarding the historical background and real fundamentals of our faith.

Christian scholars long ago adjusted our ancient creeds to modern knowledge, but our laity, as a whole, have not yet been fully informed of the results of their work. Hundreds—one is tempted to say thousands—of books have been written by clerical scholars for clerical scholars clarifying this whole complex situation. But our laymen do not have the time nor inclination to read these frequently highly technical books. As a consequence our clerical leaders are thinking in one set of terms on matters of religious faith, and millions of the rank and file of our laity are thinking in a quite different set of terms. The result is confusion throughout the Protestant Church. Many popularly written books cover special fields but not the whole of this complicated problem. We need books written primarily for our laity which will bring within the compass of a single volume two achievements. First, the facts regarding the historical foundations of our faith, and, second, a presentation of the practical world issues which now confront us.

To present this second situation is not so difficult a task as is the presentation of the first. When we begin to rethink our system of belief we become involved in many confusing entanglements—much that is eternally true is entangled with temporary phases of ways of believing which belonged to past ages. To separate the permanent from the passing is a most difficult undertaking.

The Protestant Church is confused in its thinking largely because of erroneous conceptions of the Bible and the original

religion of Jesus. The origin of our Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus belong to history. We can best clarify our confusion by approaching our problem from the historical point of view. Our faith is based upon historical events. Its foundations rest upon an historical revelation contained in the Bible which reaches its climax in the life and teachings of the Jesus of history. These facts are open to historical investigation. Upon these facts our faith is founded and must be sustained.

The thought to which this volume is addressed will be developed in two different books. Book One will deal with the origin of our Bible, and also with an account of the original religion of Jesus and what later happened to it. After we have completed this historical survey we shall turn, in Book Two, to a consideration of the living issues of the modern world in the light of our commitment to the original religion of Jesus.

This work is attempted in a spirit of deep humility and with reverence for the sacredness and seriousness of the materials which are to be handled. To my fundamentalist friends I shall seem alarmingly destructive in many places; to my radical secular friends I shall seem too conservative and in many places they will have the feeling that this volume is a strange mixture of antiquity and modernity. I ask a patient and open-minded reading to the end. If this volume will stimulate the writing of far abler books addressed to this same task—if it will make even a very small contribution toward reconciling all elements in our common faith that we may better meet the colossal tasks which confront us in this day of change and confusion, the prayer and the purpose of the author will be abundantly rewarded.

The human mind is an instrument capable of playing many strange tricks upon us. Most of us are the victims of deep prejudices of whose existence within us and distorting power over us we are not aware. Our most powerful prejudices are unconsciously held. No one can attempt the writing of a vol-

ume, addressed to the type of theme which is to engage us in this work, and not realize that he will be forced to encounter many prejudices—his own as well as others. This volume lays no claim to infallibility. I shall strive to free my own mind of its many prejudices and I earnestly invite all who may read these pages to do the same.

In the pages which lie before us we shall move in two different worlds. In Book One we shall be living in an ancient world, apparently far removed from the issues of the world today. In Book Two we shall face Today. But we cannot face Today with a living faith—magnificently adequate to meet the issues of our times—unless first we know the truth concerning this story of Yesterday. Our living faith goes back to a Light whose flame was kindled in ancient days. That is why we shall turn first to Yesterday—in order that we may better face Today.

It would be easy to plunge straight ahead into Book Two and to evade a discussion of the historic foundations of our faith. Many books dealing with the real issues of the modern world, from the Christian viewpoint, do this. But such books do not clarify the fundamental cause of our Protestant confusion and division, which can only be met by a patient treatment that seeks first to explain to the rank and file of our people the truth about the Bible and the original religion of Jesus. It is an old story, but it is thrillingly interesting. It has to do with the most significant events of history.

Throughout this volume I shall purposely employ a quite unconventional style of writing, touching its pages in many places with intimately personal experiences and observations. This work is not addressed to clerical leaders but is written primarily for the rank and file of our laity, seeking to condense into a single volume a wide variety of materials with which clerical leaders have long been thoroughly familiar.

BOOK ONE

YESTERDAY

AN ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND  
OF OUR INHERITED FAITH





## CHAPTER I

### THE OLDER ROLLS OF PARCHMENT

#### THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ANCIENT JEW, THE MAN WHO WROTE THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE Christian religion long ago anchored its faith to a great doctrine about the Bible. That anchor must hold. If it gives way our faith is undone. In anchoring our faith to a belief in the Bible as a supernatural revelation from God, our forefathers, many ages ago, did something else which has had some very serious consequences. There is no group of liberals within our Protestant churches who are attacking the Bible or expressing unbelief in its infallible truth. Objection is made to a certain doctrine about the Bible which was long ago artificially superimposed upon it and which has done injustice to it.

The origin and contents of the Bible belong to human history. This sacred collection of writings did not drop miraculously out of the skies. This Holy Book was written by men. No one who truly reveres the Bible should wish to exempt it from historical investigation. Our efforts to understand its divine greatness will be amply repaid if we bring to our task the same critical intelligence we are accustomed to employ in investigating any other historical documents or happenings. During the last one hundred years archeology and historical criticism have brought to us a flood of new knowledge—unknown to our Protestant fathers—which has thrown a great light upon the Bible and changed many of our conceptions of it. We now have a far more rational understanding of the origin and contents of the Bible than our

fathers had. This Holy Book stands before us today as a work of divine greatness, compelling in its eternal truth. In it we still hear the Eternal Voice speaking to the depths of the heart of man.

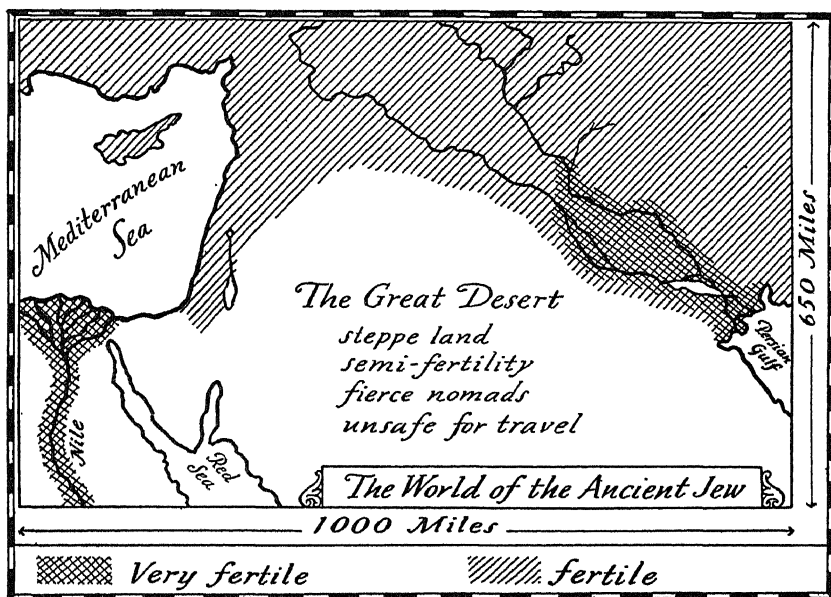
How liberal Christian scholarship has arrived at this greater and more rational appreciation of the Bible is a long but thrillingly interesting story. To that story we shall next direct our thought. The facts which will be briefly outlined have been long known and are agreed upon by liberal Christian scholarship throughout the modern world.

We shall be concerned first with a clearer understanding of the geographical and historical background of the ancient Jew, the man who wrote our Bible. We must know the story of this unusual people, who they were, where they came from and what contemporary influences played upon them. We shall then be in a better position to understand how this unique race was used of God as a channel for a mighty revelation of eternal truth.

This ancient people first appear in history moving up from out of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley to a strip of land along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, called Palestine. The world in which the Hebrews lived was about six hundred and fifty miles in extent north and south (the length of California), and about one thousand miles, east and west (the distance from San Francisco to the eastern boundary of New Mexico). Beyond these boundaries the world to these ancient Hebrews was little known. They had vague ideas of dim far regions, where India is today toward the east, where Spain is today toward the west. The world, of course, to them was flat and they wondered much about how it came to be. They had ideas on the subject, limited, naturally, by the knowledge then available and influenced by the theories of neighboring peoples.

The world in which they lived was not a very fertile place. There were only two regions in it of much fertility. One was in the valley of the Nile. Here the earliest civilization known

in history was achieved. The fertile valley of the Nile embraced about twelve thousand square miles which is approximately the size of the state of Maryland. Impressive ruins of this ancient civilization are still standing. One who has looked upon them can never forget the pyramids of Gizeh and the tombs and temples of Luxor and Karnak.



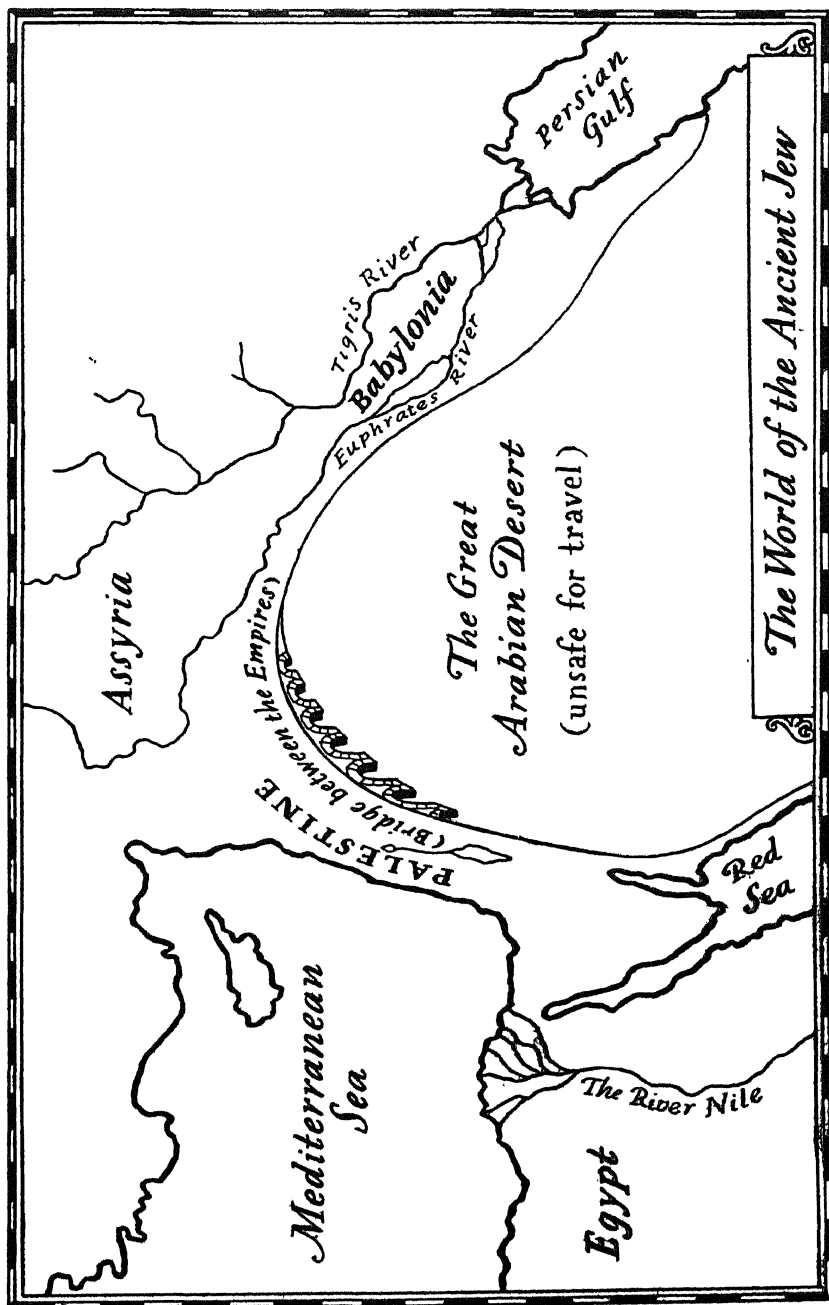
The other region of abundant fertility was in the lower Tigris-Euphrates Valley embracing an area of about nine thousand square miles which is about the size of the state of New Hampshire. This fertile valley was the seat of those great civilizations of antiquity known as the Babylonian, Chaldean, Assyrian and Persian. For the past one hundred years archeologists have been uncovering the ruins of these ancient cultures.

Two-thirds of the whole geographical area known to the Hebrews had no fertility and was incapable of supporting human life. In all of this area there were only one hundred

thousand square miles which were blessed with even semi-fertility. This semi-fertile area approximates the size of the state of Wyoming. By referring to the map one can easily trace the outlines of what historians call "the fertile crescent." One tip of it embraces the Nile Valley to the west; the other tip embraces the lower Tigris-Euphrates Valley to the east. The great arcs of the crescent swing toward the north missing the "Great Desert." This was the world in which the Hebrew, who wrote our Bible, lived his life.

The possession of parts or all of this fertile crescent was the object of fierce struggles between the myriads of peoples whose hunger-needs and terrific pressures of increasing populations pressed mercilessly upon them. Outside that fertile crescent were vast stretches of barren desert and tumbled mountain ranges thrown up by geological upheavals in the slow settling of the earth's crust untold ages ago. The fertile crescent embraces Palestine, the homeland of the Hebrew people. Palestine is aptly called by historians the "bridge between the empires." Across this bridge the ancient armies of the world marched back and forth, as the valley of the Nile struck out in war at the valley of the Tigris-Euphrates, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and the others clashed in numerous conflicts of arms for the conquest of their world. The Hebrew suffered ever-recurring invasions; his villages and cities were frequently destroyed; his sons and daughters carried off into slavery, his land laid waste. Bitterness and tragedy were his lot across the centuries and he dreamed great dreams of the coming at some future time of a Messiah who would do for him miraculously what he could not do for himself.

The earliest traces of these Hebrew people indicate that certain dim, distant and little known tribal leaders came up from a far region to the east around Ur of the Chaldees and settled in Palestine. Years pass and we find the Hebrew a slave in Egypt. The ruling Pharaoh of the oppression was very likely Rameses II, the ruins of whose mighty building enter-



prises are to be seen all over Egypt today. Following the extravagant regime of Rameses II there was a brief period of bankruptcy and the collapse of government in the valley of the Nile.

Under this chaotic state of affairs the Hebrew slaves marched out of Egypt, led by one of the towering figures of history, a Hebrew named Moses, who had been reared in the royal court and given the highest education of his day. Moses left an indelible impress upon the ancient Jew and many noble traditions grew up about him and were handed down around the desert campfires and hearthstones of these people from generation to generation. Much of this oral tradition about Moses, and much else connected with their early life, centuries later was incorporated in their growing literature. There are elaborate codes of law in the Hebrew writings which were attributed to Moses. Some of these laws are copied from the code of Hammurabi, who ruled a civilization far to the east, in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, some six to seven hundred years before Moses was born. The Hebrew is a quite modern, ancient man. He appears upon the world stage of antiquity long after resplendent civilizations had been achieved, a wide literature, an impressive art and architecture had been produced, and many different religious faiths had come and gone. This late-comer in the ancient world was, of course, greatly influenced by these older civilizations.

It was around the year 1200 B. C. that this slave walkout of the Hebrews under Moses took place. These people were very crude and primitive in many ways yet carried with them a hatred for human oppression in all its forms. Political and industrial tyranny they despised. "The memory of their own experience enlisted their sympathies ever afterward in behalf of all victims of oppression. No other ancient people showed such tender consideration for the slave, the resident alien, the widow, the orphan, and the hired laborer. Many of Israel's noblest philanthropic laws are reinforced by the comment,

‘Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that Jehovah your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.’ Above all, this experience led the Hebrews to think of their deity as a god full of sympathy for the afflicted and dependent, and ever eager to champion their cause against cruel oppression. It is this strong social element in Israel’s early religion that distinguishes it from all other faiths, and that led the Hebrew prophets of a later age to reject sacrifices and ceremonies as a means of pleasing God and to proclaim justice and mercy and love as the sole basis of His favor.”\*

In the period we are now sketching, however, we are centuries back of the great prophets of the Hebrews. These people after years of desert wandering finally swept in upon Palestine and in a fierce struggle, by methods as cruel and brutal as those employed by any people in any conquest, they finally captured this narrow strip of land and by the year 1000 B. C. established a kingdom of considerable strength and dignity under such kings as David and Solomon. Theirs had been a long struggle for “a place in the sun,” and the Old Testament is filled with the annals of their tribal warfare and ways, the evidences of many of their crude ideas along many lines, their lapsing into the immoral practices of the religions of the peoples around them.

Somewhere between 1000 and 900 B. C. their kingdom, which under David and Solomon had achieved something of splendor, was divided by civil war. A Northern Kingdom, with its capital at Samaria, a Southern Kingdom, with its capital at Jerusalem, was the result. The armies of the empires of the earth kept thundering across this little bridge between the Empires as world movements of that day shifted back and forth across the fertile crescent. They made alliances with foreign people, were stimulated, broadened and degraded by

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\**History of the Hebrew Commonwealth*, by Bailey and Kent, p. 35 (Charles Scribner’s Sons). Quoted by permission.

contact with them. They grew rich and prosperous and oppressed their own poor and turned time and again from the higher idealisms of their greatest leaders. Their monotheistic faith was corrupted by contact with the immoral polytheisms around them. At times they offered their own children as sacrifices to appease the anger of terrible gods they came to fear.

The Northern Kingdom, more exposed and easier of access by armies of invasion, was conquered about 722 B. C., the people carried off and sold into slavery by the Assyrians and never heard of again, being absorbed by intermarriage among the alien dwellers along the Tigris-Euphrates far to the north and east.

The Southern Kingdom, protected by mountain passes and ravines, more difficult for invading armies to approach, held out longer, but was at last conquered by the Babylonians in 597-582 B. C. and its people were carried captive to Babylon. Here they widened the horizon of their thinking by contact with one of the greatest civilizations of that day. Babylon was conquered by Persia and under Persian rule the Hebrew was allowed to return to his native heath and begin the slow work of rebuilding upon the ruins everywhere about him. This was a period in which a great deal of his writing, as we have it in the Old Testament, was done.

The final hardening of his priest-ridden, highly ceremonial religion, against which Jesus rebelled, comes in at this period. There had been much of this tendency previous to this time against which his greatest prophets had lifted their voices in righteous protest. The rigid priest-strapped orthodoxy which was developed during this period dominated the religion of this people for centuries. His brave attempt to liberate His people from these narrow restrictions cost Jesus His life. The whole Bible, indeed, is a record of the struggle between the priest and the prophet in religion. The priest insists always upon believing and observing the very letter of the law. The prophet



stresses the liberation of the mind and life of the people from the restrictions of too legalistic an interpretation of faith, pushing to the fore the spirit and not the letter of true religion.

The Old Testament reaches its climax in the work and preaching of the great liberals of their day, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah and others, coming to grips with the real issues of their time, proclaiming that true religion is both a way of belief and a way of life, that burnt offerings and such things mean nothing unless the heart of the inner man is truly repentant before God, and mercy, justice and love characterize the dealings of man with man. The Old Testament rises to one of its greatest heights in Micah 6:8, "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Jesus Himself in summing up the whole of the meaning of the Old Testament said, quoting from the Old Testament itself, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

In the 300's B. C., Alexander the Great conquered the world of his day and the Hebrew came under the influence of Greek thought and culture. Between 200 and 100 B. C. the Hebrew rebelled against his Greek conquerors, under the fierce patriotism of the Maccabees and for a brief time the Jew was a free man ruling his own land. Jealousy and bitterness between two rival Jewish sects, stirred to rage against one another over doctrinal questions, betrayed the Hebrew into the clutches of the marching legions of Rome and in the year 63 B. C. Palestine came under the yoke of the Empire.

This in essence is a rapid sketch of the history of the man behind the Old Testament, the story of the ancient Jew who wrote its books. Not much writing was done by these people previous to the year 1000 B. C. It was only after they had settled themselves with some security as a nation, under

such kings as David and Solomon, that these people—like a very active business man who wins what he wants and then, retiring from his feverish activities, begins to read up a bit on his family genealogy and turns to the writing of his memoirs—that these people began a serious attempt to put in literary form their history: who they were, where they had come from, what had happened to them in centuries past, who were their great men, what were their great deeds in days that were dead. They went about the writing up of such a history by gathering together all the hero tales of their race, all the myths, legends, miraculous stories of marvelous events which had been handed down from generation to generation, largely in oral form. They gathered what written data there was, sifted it, edited it, re-edited it and then began to put it all together. This was around the year 1000 B. C., and was the beginning of the forming of the many books of the Old Testament, thirty-nine in all, as we now have them. For the following nearly one thousand years, they kept on writing, collecting, sifting, sorting, editing, re-editing. Some time before Jesus was born the last of their books as we have them in the Old Testament, had been written. They wrote on many subjects: poetry, fiction, history, legislation, religion and so on. They made all their literature serve a moral end; everything they touched in their writings was given a meaning of moral significance. They were deeply interested in morality and religion.

Their greatest achievement was the grasping of a moral monotheism which stands out, the more one knows the facts of that ancient world, like a Light in a great darkness. Immoral and absurdly complicated polytheisms characterized most of the other religions of their day. Tutankhamon in Egypt, the opening of whose tomb excited world-wide interest only a few years ago, was the son-in-law of a ruler of Egypt in whose mind there apparently first developed the idea of monotheism, the idea of One God, the God of All the Earth. This ruler's name was Ikhnaton. He lived around 1400 B. C., many

centuries before the Hebrew prophets had grasped and proclaimed the idea of One God, the God of All the Earth. The earliest Hebrew conception of God was naturally limited to a tribal concept. Their God, as the Bible itself expresses their thought, was a God who was "jealous of other Gods."

Dr. James Henry Breasted in *The Conquest of Civilization*,\* in discussing the rise of monotheistic conceptions, suggests that it should not be difficult for us of America to understand why it took a long time for any ancient people to grasp the idea of One God, instead of many gods. He writes that naturally all ancient peoples thought of "their god" as the god of their particular land or tribe or people. "No one at that distant day had conceived of the world or of a world god controlling it. In America of today we can easily understand these limitations; for we have only to recall our own slowness to recognize the fact that the World War, which for the first time carried our troops to another continent, has thrust us into an international arena. Out of a somewhat similar experience, internationalism grew up in Egypt after 1400 B. C. With it came a new conception, the *world idea*, and quite naturally, for the first time in human experience, the idea of a *world god*—sole sovereign over them all. This was the earliest monotheism (one-god-ism)." But this monotheistic insight of Ikhnaton was short lived. It was too liberal for the religionists of that far Egyptian day. The orthodox priests of the great temples of Egypt would have none of it. It was not according to the faith of their fathers who for ages had believed in many gods.

After Ikhnaton died and Tutankhamon, who had married Ikhnaton's daughter, came to the throne of Egypt, young Tutankhamon fought a losing battle with the priests of the older faith. Directly or indirectly they probably had him done to death, and the old polytheistic orthodox religion swept back over Egypt. Young Tutankhamon was a victim of a great

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insight and dream of the human spirit whose light was soon put out by religious intolerance. Outside of the achievement of the Hebrews, this Egyptian incident stands practically alone and it, as has been shown, was of a duration almost negligible. The most grotesque, absurdly complicated and frequently grossly immoral polytheisms dominated the whole of the ancient world for thousands of years.

Viewed against the background of this darkness of superstition and immorality the achievement of the Hebrew stands out with convincing impressiveness. He not only grasped a magnificent conception but he maintained his hold upon it and gave expression to it in an exalting literature whose influence will never die. Broken and imperfect fragments of his conception were grasped by other peoples, but for him the unique honor was reserved. He became the channel through whom the Light of moral monotheism entered and was maintained in the thought of mankind. No other people grasped as he did the conception of One God, the God of All the Earth, who was a God of Justice and Righteousness who demanded justice and righteousness among men. Looked at from any angle, one must recognize that as an achievement before which one stands in awe and reverence. It is a conception which has singularly blessed and ennobled the life of man. The Mind of the Eternal, explain it as we may, certainly spoke through the minds of the writers of that ancient Book. Their sacred writings do not deal fundamentally with something which the ancient Jew achieved, but with something he received from the Eternal God. The Old Testament embraces not primarily an explanation but a revelation of infallible moral and spiritual truth.

#### MIRACLE STORIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

These people in collecting their ancient hero tales and tribal traditions—stories of how the world was created and evil first

entered it, what stirring events had happened to them in the past, what great cataclysms had come at times upon the earth—naturally included myths, legends and miracle tales.

Some of the noblest expressions in the world's literature are found in the great myths and legends of the past. There is much, it is true, in ancient mythology and legendary lore that is bizarre, fantastic and ugly. But there is also much of the distilled essence of the wisdom of the past which has come down to us in these great legacies from dim half-forgotten yesterdays. Some of these legends have a depth that is profound, a touch that is exalting to the human spirit. They are a part of the story of man's search for a meaning in things that satisfies the restless craving in his heart to interpret the world in which he lives and the strange forces that make and mold his destiny. They bring down to us today dim memories of things once pondered over in the early morning of our kind upon the earth. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is a legendary expression of surpassing magnificence. There is nothing in the Greek or Latin Classics to be compared with the stately dignity of its diction, the poignancy of its tragedy, the realism of its drama of the conflict within the human soul between good and evil. Man lives in a beautiful world which his sin makes ugly and tragic. But above and beyond man and his tragedy stands the Everlasting.

In early Hebraic literature there is also the myth about Noah and his Ark and the great flood which, they thought, once covered the whole earth. As a story with high moral teachings it is magnificent. As literal, historic fact, it is of course impossible. We do gross injustice to these ancient people and their Holy Book when we fasten any such literal ideas upon them. The Oriental mind to this day says many of its finest things in miracle-tales, myths, legends and parables. It may be granted without hesitation that in many of these legends these ancient writers thought they were writing literal history. We cannot so accept such stories. The important point for

them and for us is to grasp the underlying moral and spiritual teachings set forth in all these tales.

There is also the myth of the building of the Tower of Babel with its legendary explanation of how the many different languages of the earth came to be. Traces of these myths are to be found in the literatures of many ancient peoples, but to compare all of them with the Hebrew versions of them is to see at once how far above the others the Hebrews were. These myths were bizarre and ridiculously fantastic among all the other ancient peoples who narrated them. Under the touch of the Hebrew writer the same myths were refined and made to impress high moral and spiritual meanings.

In considering their miracle stories it should be borne in mind that no one at that day had any idea of what we call natural law. Miracles to their mind were natural, though strikingly unusual ways in which material phenomenon on occasion manifested itself. To put our twentieth-century scientific concepts into the thinking of those ancient Hebrew writers and to think with such scientific knowledge those ancient men wrote those miracle stories, is to do the Hebrew and the Old Testament a great injustice. There were a few glimmerings of a conception of natural law governing the natural world far back in Egypt, then again in Greece hundreds of years before Christ was born, but these glimmerings flashed for but a moment and then went out altogether.

It was not until about three hundred years ago that the idea of natural law governing the natural world began to be taken seriously in our modern era. The result has been the amazing scientific achievements of our day. Any occurrence in nature, to our modern scientific mind, is a natural occurrence with natural causes. Not so to these ancient people. Storms, floods, volcanoes, wind, rain, heat, cold, crops, famine, birth, death, everything was done by the special, direct intervention of supernatural forces. A modern scientist standing on the shore of the Red Sea, which the Bible narrative tells us miraculously

parted when Moses and the Hebrew slaves from out of Egypt crossed over, would have a quite different account to give than that given by the Hebrew writers. They saw the event through pre-scientific eyes that had no conception whatsoever of what we today call science. A modern scientist would see the same event with scientific eyes, and, of course, would explain why certain things happened, in a very different way. He would explain it on natural, not supernatural grounds.

A misunderstanding of what we are seeking to make plain here has wrought such confusion in the thinking of Christendom, that we do well to spend considerable time in clearing it up. All that is written here is, of course, familiar to all Christian scholars and was long ago clearly settled in their minds. But these things to this day are not clearly understood by the rank and file of our Protestant people. As long as impossible ideas continue among us on these very elementary matters the Christian Church is bound to be afflicted with confusion in its thinking and a medieval sloth in its progress.

There is the story of the Jordan River becoming miraculously dry when the Israelites crossed over it on their invasion of Palestine. I have been to what is likely the very spot where the Hebrews made this crossing. What most likely actually happened I shall let Doctor Fosdick tell. "We tried to recapitulate in our imagination their experience as we, like them, crossed the fords of Jordan toward Jericho. What happened to make the passage of that river so memorable? If one goes upstream a few miles from the ford, he finds the river flowing in a serpentine channel between clay cliffs, undercutting the banks, and carving out new waterways. Only a few years ago the people at the fords were amazed to see Jordan so dry that one could walk across it, and for several hours it so continued before the stream returned. A clay cliff up the river had caved in, filling the channel and forcing the accumulating stream to reopen an old course which it formerly had followed but long since abandoned. One wonders if some such thing

happened at that ancient crossing of the river.”\* This is probably the true explanation of the natural causes of a perfectly natural event, which to the pre-scientific ways of thinking of the Hebrews appeared to be the result of a direct supernatural intervention.

I have stood in the old Canaanite city of Jericho, recently dug up by modern archeologists, and had pointed out to me the plain and unmistakable evidence of what must have happened when that city fell before the attack of the Hebrews. Doctor Garstang, the archeologist in charge of excavating, emphasized some very interesting things as he showed us about the disinterred ruins. The old walls and houses indicate that they were tumbled in by an earthquake. The curving, crumpled lines made in the stones of the walls and houses when the earthquake yielded the supporting ground beneath them, are quite plain. That is most probably the true explanation of what happened. The Hebrews in telling about it in their narratives tell of their blowing trumpets as they marched around the walls of the city. From their account they evidently thought the city walls collapsed as the result of a direct supernatural intervention. What they wrote is the truth as it appeared to their pre-scientific ways of thinking. The plain evidence of a natural and not a supernatural cause of the fall of Jericho is there, to this day, thanks to the diggings of modern archeology.

I have stood on the shore at the south end of the Dead Sea and seen “Lot’s Wife,” a great pillar of salt. She stands high up on the side of Jebel Usdum (Salt Mountain, a large mountain composed entirely of salt), and she is “looking” east, across the Dead Sea, where on the other side there is plain evidence of some mighty volcanic eruption having taken place ages ago (“and it rained down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah”). What have you here, a natural or a super-

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\*From Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Pilgrimage to Palestine*. By permission of the Macmillan Company, publishers.



natural occurrence? The facts are plain. Some great cataclysm did occur there, raining down "fire and brimstone from high heaven." Ancient cities, it is believed, lie buried under that volcanic debris, as Pompeii lay buried for centuries under the ashes of the eruption of Vesuvius in the year 79 A. D. The year I visited Palestine a group of German archeologists arrived on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea to dig into this volcanic stuff, covering the ground for miles, to see if they could not discover some ancient buried cities which most probably were once there. "Lot's Wife," transfixed and mute, gazes upon this scene of desolation. One who has seen her image can never forget it, standing stark upon a mountain top silhouetted against the sky, the figure and form of an Oriental woman, with long robes, flowing headdress and swelling bosom.

How did this marvelously miraculous tale of a woman turned suddenly into salt ever find its way into the literature of the Bible? The answer is so plain, based on such everyday common sense, that it seems strange anyone, giving the matter only a few moments' thought, could fail to see it. The ancient Hebrew had his tales, handed down by oral tradition from generation to generation, of Abraham and Lot and the "wicked cities" of Sodom and Gomorrah. Like the folk-lore of all peoples, his tales naturally grew with the telling from generation to generation, changed a bit here, embellished a bit there as many different story-tellers of many succeeding generations touched them with their vivid Oriental imagination.

There came a day when some Hebrew—with, of course, an altogether pre-scientific mentality—wandering down there in that particular area of the Dead Sea, suddenly caught with his eye that startling likeness of a woman standing high upon the mountain side, her face and form sharply drawn against the great blue canvas which completely envelops our earth. Of course, the sight of such a thing flashing suddenly before his eyes must have made him gasp and quite naturally set his mind

to working and wondering. . . . A woman turned to salt! There it was, as plain as day for anyone to see! How did that ever come to be? In a flash the answer came to him in the most natural way in which pre-scientific Oriental minds have always worked. In our New England, North Carolina and Rocky Mountains we have all noticed faces and human forms etched against the sky. We account for such phenomena as freakish effects of natural erosion, but to expect an ancient Hebrew to account for such things in the same manner is to fail to understand the ways of thinking of a pre-scientific mind. It was the most sincerely natural thing for that ancient Hebrew to go back to his village and to start the story among his people of Lot's wife who was turned into salt because she "looked back" at Sodom and Gomorrah in the hour of their destruction. The tale was told from generation to generation. It became a thrilling part of their folk-lore and finally found its way into their written literature.

Such an explanation of this ancient tale is not given as an attack upon the truth of the Bible but is given in defense of the Bible. This is simply a rational explanation and defense of these numerous folk-lore tales that are in the Bible. They ought to be there. They belong there as part of the life and thought of the pre-scientific era out of which the literature of the Bible emerged. If they were not there the genuineness of the Bible, as a very ancient document, would be open to serious questioning. Once one grasps this very simple explanation, no impossible miracle tales in the Bible will any longer confuse one. One will read right through them with eyes of appreciation and understanding, reading on to those everlastingly true moral and spiritual teachings of the Bible which are its crowning glory, and which furnish unassailable proof of its divine inspiration!

It must be borne in mind that these Oriental people to this day are marvelous story-tellers. The information and entertainment we derive from books and plays they enjoyed in

listening to their story-tellers. To this day they gather around their tale-tellers in their homes and coffee-shops. I have listened to their marvelous tales told out in the "Garden of Allah," underneath the stars. And so it came to pass long ago that some ancient Hebrew story-teller saw that block of salt (or one like it, there or somewhere else), noticed that it looked like a woman miraculously changed into salt and in all sincerity he began the tale of Lot's wife. The tale persisted in the folk-lore of the people. They never tired of hearing it repeated. It spoke of the marvels of the power and ways of their God Jehovah. It spoke principally of the devastation which is visited upon human iniquity. It told of what happened to a woman of indecision who, instead of following without hesitation the high call of righteousness of Jehovah, looked back longingly upon a city in which human flesh had found licentious and degrading pleasure.

The tale teaches a great moral truth, true yesterday, today and forever: the world is a moral order; clean and righteous living exalts our human life; living our life upon the level of beasts with only animal desires and animal satisfactions brings destruction upon us. It is not necessary for the Bible to apologize for such teachings. . . . And so this story of the destruction of the cities of iniquity and of the woman who looked back longingly upon them and who was turned into a pillar of salt, these old Jews told to their children and they in turn to their children's children. And finally it became a part of their written literature. As America once said, "Remember the Maine," these people in moments of moral lethargy when carnal things loomed vividly and moral truths seemed dim and unreal, said to themselves, "Remember Lot's wife!" and moral sense and sanity returned to them. Under the touch of these Hebrew writers this old tale is made to teach a timeless truth. It is not the miraculous element in the story that matters; it is the moral and spiritual teaching that matters. This was the main point to them and this should be the main point to us.

When a modern man focuses his mind upon the miraculous elements in that story, and attempts to defend its literal truth he misses altogether what the Bible is really all about. It is a book of incomparable beauty and greatness in its dealings with moral and spiritual principles. It is childish and pre-scientific in many of its accounts of natural phenomena. To expect these ancient Hebrews to account for natural occurrences as we do with our modern scientific apparatus and knowledge is to expect the impossible. To insist upon a literal acceptance of these miraculous stories is to miss the point of what the Bible really is—an inspired and inspiring book on moral and spiritual themes.

Well do I remember the long trek I made a few years ago, partly by automobile, partly on horseback, along the road to Mecca, down into the mountains of the desert of Arabia to the ancient city of Petra which was lost to our Western world for nearly fourteen hundred years. My camp outfit had a number of Bedouins in it. Mr. Jacob Spafford, of the American Colony of Jerusalem, who spoke Arabic fluently, and who continuously interpreted to me what the Arabs were saying, was my guide and companion on this trip. (In the death of Mr. Spafford in an automobile accident in the summer of 1932, Palestine and the whole Christian world has suffered a great loss. He was a rare soul of a high order of intelligence and graciousness of spirit.)

I recall our coming to a large rock in that barren wilderness and hearing somewhere the gurgle of a stream of water. What that sound is like no man knows who has not traveled and lived in those vast stretches of solitude. For miles we had traveled over the parched, sun-baked clay and gravel of the waterless desert. I had come to know better what the Bible phrases meant that spoke of water as a symbol of spiritual life which if a man drank of "he would never thirst again." The sound of running water in such a wilderness! To me, in this twentieth century, actually to be there and have this experi-

ence, was to feel that something "miraculous" was about to happen. I was taken around to the other side of an immense rock. Flowing underneath the rock was a large gurgling stream of clear cool water. Kneeling down, I put my dry lips into the stream and drank water which was, indeed, not only water but also life.

Our Arabs told me this was the place where Moses in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, struck the rock, out of which water miraculously flowed, and so prevented the Hebrews on that ancient trek from dying of thirst in the wilderness. (See Numbers 20: 1-12.) I am aware that Moses probably did not lead the Israelites near this particular place, but according to Mohammedan tradition he did. Moses is held in high reverence in the Mohammedan Koran. I cite this as but a living example of how easy and natural it would have been for those ancient Hebrews having just such an experience as we had—tired, thirsty, in a barren wilderness, coming upon such a stream of water—to have started the tale, which kept on growing and becoming more marvelous with each telling, that the water had come in some miraculous way. Anyone with an understanding of the mentality of pre-scientific peoples, and of the manner in which the folk-lore of all races is developed and becomes the basis for much of the earliest written literature of all peoples, cannot live for even a brief time in Palestine with the people who live there now, and fail to secure a very illuminating insight into our Biblical literature of both the Old and the New Testaments.

In those ancient lands whose soil nourished and produced the Bible one still finds living tendencies which throw an understanding light upon its origin and meaning. To this day the natives out there attribute everything that happens to "Allah." They hardly speak a sentence dealing with the most commonplace occurrences in which the word Allah (uhl-lah) does not occur. In a boat with a group of native fishermen one night on the Sea of Gallilee, under the full Syrian

moon with the dim be-shadowed hills around us, upon the tops of which the Master spent many a night in the lonely vigil of prayer, I saw them with my own eyes "cast in their nets and draw out great draughts of fishes." I asked them, "How many fish do you catch?" They replied, naturally and simply, in language they always use about all such matters, "As many as Allah gives us."

The language of the people there today is the language of the Bible. The boy who tends your camel or leads your donkey, the Arab chauffeur who drives your car, the native who fills your gas tank at the filling station, all use the poetical, metaphorical figures of speech of the Bible. They account for the most natural, everyday occurrences as supernatural events due to the miraculous intervention of deity. Any unusual event, which may occur today, one will hear reported, not a week hence, as a marvelous miracle.

In the desolate wilderness of Judea there is a tragic mountain named Masada. It was the site in ancient days of a scene of horror and heroism. Upon its summit a faction of Jews, living in a period close to the time of Christ, once made a desperate gesture in defense of their freedom. The walls of this grim mountain, almost perpendicular, rise to a height of two thousand feet above the base. Its huge bulk stands out impressively in the desolate Dead Sea plain. It is many miles from the nearest grazing grounds or place of human habitation. In this region one stands alone dependent upon his own resources or that of his traveling companions.

I was determined when I was in Palestine to climb to the top of Masada and a small party was composed for that purpose. Scaling the steep side of the mountain a group of us were caught in a difficult situation. About half-way up—on account of the loose shale—we found ourselves unable to go down or to climb up. Far off in the plain below us two figures appeared robed in white. They were Arabs. How they happened to know we were there and had planned so hazardous a

trip, they would never tell us. Mr. John Whiting, who writes for *The National Geographic*, and who has spent his life in that section of the world and speaks Arabic fluently, called out to them to come to our aid. Some time later they appeared above us on the opposite side of the gorge. With ropes and with their goat-like agility they "saved" us.

After several hours of hard climbing we were up to the top of Masada amid the ruins of an impregnable fortification to which several hundred Jewish patriots fled when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A. D. These Jews, with their women and children, maintained themselves for several years on the summit of this grim mountain in this region of utter desolation. A Roman army of several thousand men kept watch, during those terrible years, around the base of Masada, whose sheer precipices they attempted in vain to climb. Finally the besieged ran out of water due to a long drought which had dried up their deep cisterns on the mountain top. In this desperate situation, rather than surrender themselves to be brutally massacred or to be carried in chains to the slaves markets of Rome, these deluded fanatics, superb in their mad heroism, put themselves to the sword in a compact of mass suicide. The full story of Masada and of our interesting climb to its summit lack of space prohibits my telling. The only point of mentioning this incident has been to emphasize the strangely suggestive aspect of the sudden appearance of those two Arabs.

When we had reached the top, Mr. Whiting asked them in Arabic, "How did you know we were here?" As naturally as we of the West might have made the most commonplace statement, they replied, as though nothing unusual was involved in what they were saying, "Allah sent us to you." As a matter of fact, what likely happened was that some Arab in Jerusalem, where we bought supplies and made the arrangements for our trip, overheard what we intended to do. Knowing we were bound to become involved in difficulties, he

probably tipped off some natives, who passed the word down to shepherds watching their flocks miles away from Masada, and two of these shepherds, dressed, as they all are, in long flowing white robes, made it their business to appear at the right time, to help us out, in order that they might earn some baksheesh. All they would say, however, in answer to our questions, was, "Allah sent us to you!"—which was very beautiful and very true.

That day I saw quite clearly the basis and foundation in fact for many a Bible story of the miraculous appearance of angels. When this memorable day was done and night had fallen we took leave of these Arabs. The memory of those two men, telling us good-by at the end of that day in which they had meant so much to us, standing under the moon with its soft silver light upon them, saying "*Mah el salaami*" (go in peace), is like the memory of angels sent miraculously into my life. To the poetical mind of the natives out there, they were angels and will quite likely be so spoken of for years to come in their tales told around their campfires at night underneath the stars.

There is a strange mysterious spell which lies to this day over that section of the world. There is now and always has been a deep mysticism in the soul of many of its people. Their ways of thinking are not our ways of thinking. Our minds are matter-of-fact; theirs are not. Their thought runs so often in channels of simple loveliness and great beauty. God seems to be so near and so real to them, guiding and directing their life down to the smallest detail. Who of us of the superficially materialistic West has the right to say that they are wrong in so thinking? Our confusion arises when, from our Occidental viewpoint, we pour a magical content into events which to their minds are not a violation of the natural order of things, but are looked upon as the natural way in which the Supreme Being cares for His earthly creatures. We may call this a crude anthropomorphic concept if we like, but in saying such things we too are guilty of intellectual processes which are



more shallow than our Western minds are generally willing to admit.

There are other narratives in the Old Testament which belong in a quite different category. The Biblical writers tell of illuminating spiritual experiences. They tell of hearing voices, of having visions, of becoming aware, in ways no words could ever tell, of the Divine Presence. All such passages deserve the most careful consideration. They do not deal with unusual events occurring in nature. They deal with unusual events occurring to and within human nature, and all such Biblical accounts should be read from an entirely different viewpoint from that employed in the reading of Old Testament stories of nature miracles.

Reference to an old classic of modern times should be of help to one seeking to understand Biblical accounts of unusual spiritual experiences. In his scholarly and most readable book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James has made an interesting investigation. In a chapter entitled "The Reality of the Unseen," he clearly establishes the fact that there is an order of reality which is unseen, and of which the average man is never, or only very rarely, aware. There are "states of consciousness," produced by causes we do not yet clearly understand, in which quite normal men do become vividly aware of a compelling spiritual Presence. This overwhelming Presence they can only call and they do call . . . God. What they thus experience is difficult for them to explain to others because such experiences lie so entirely outside the realm of normal human consciousness that we really have no words adequate for their description. For men who have "seen" the Unseen, and who attempt to explain their experience to others, is frequently like a man who has been thrilled by listening to the music of some great symphony orchestra trying to explain that experience to a man who has never heard music and has no idea of what it must be like. James writes:\*

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\**The Varieties of Religious Experience*, by William James, pp. 65-68. Published by Longmans, Green & Company, and quoted by permission.

"Nothing is more common in the pages of religious biography than the way in which seasons of lively and of difficult faith are described as alternating. Probably every religious person has the recollection of particular crises in which a directer vision of the truth, a direct perception, perhaps, of a living God's existence, swept in and overwhelmed the languor of the more ordinary belief. In James Russell Lowell's correspondence there is a brief memorandum of an experience of this kind:—"I had a revelation last Friday evening. I was at Mary's, and happening to say something of the presence of spirits (of whom, I said, I was often dimly aware), Mr. Putnam entered into an argument with me on spiritual matters. As I was speaking, the whole system rose up before me like a vague destiny looming from the Abyss. I never before so clearly felt the Spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me full of God. The air seemed to waver to and fro with the presence of Something, I knew not what. I spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet. I cannot tell you what this revelation was. I have not yet studied it enough. But I shall perfect it one day, and then you shall hear it and acknowledge its grandeur!"

"Here is a longer and more developed experience from a manuscript communication by a clergyman,—I take it from Starbuck's manuscript collection:—

"I remember the night and almost the very spot on the hilltop, where my soul opened out, as it were, into the Infinite, and there was a rushing together of the two worlds, the inner and the outer. It was deep calling unto deep,—the deep that my own struggle had opened up within being answered by the unfathomable deep without, reaching beyond the stars. I stood alone with Him who had made me, and all the beauty of the world, and love, and sorrow, and even temptation. I did not seek Him, but felt the perfect unison of my spirit with His. The ordinary sense of things around me faded. For the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exaltation remained. It is impossible fully to describe the experience. It was like the effect of some great orchestra when all the separate notes have melted into one swelling harmony that

leaves the listener conscious of nothing save that his soul is being wafted upwards, and almost bursting with its own emotion. The perfect stillness of the night was thrilled by a more solemn silence. The darkness held a presence that was all the more felt because it was not seen. I could not any more have doubted that He was there than that I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two.

“ ‘My highest faith in God and truest idea of Him were then born in me. I have stood upon the Mount of Vision since, and felt the Eternal round about me. But never since has there come quite the same stirring of the heart. Then, if ever, I believe, I stood face to face with God, and was born anew of His spirit. There was, as I recall it, no sudden change of thought or of belief, except that my early crude conception had, as it were, burst into flower. There was no destruction of the old, but a rapid, wonderful unfolding. Since that time no discussion that I have heard of the proofs of God’s existence has been able to shake my faith. Having once felt the presence of God’s spirit, I have never lost it again for long. My most assuring evidence of His existence is deeply rooted in that hour of vision, in the memory of that supreme experience, and in the conviction, gained from reading and reflection, that something the same has come to all who have found God. I am aware that it may justly be called mystical. I am not enough acquainted with philosophy to defend it from that or any other charge. I feel that in writing of it I have overlaid it with words rather than put it clearly to your thought. But such as it is, I have described it as carefully as I now am able to do.’

“ ‘Here is another document, even more definite in character, which, the writer being a Swiss, I translate from the French original.

“ ‘I was in perfect health; we were on our sixth day of tramping, and in good training. We had come the day before from Sixt to Trient by Buet. I felt neither fatigue, hunger, nor thirst, and my state of mind was equally healthy. I had had at Forlax good news from home; I was subject to no anxiety, either near or remote, for we had a good guide, and there was not a shadow of uncer-

tainty about the road we should follow. I can best describe the condition in which I was by calling it a state of equilibrium. When all at once I experienced a feeling of being raised above myself, I felt the Presence of God—I tell of the thing just as I was conscious of it—as if His goodness and His power were penetrating me altogether. The throb of emotion was so violent that I could barely tell the boys to pass on and not wait for me. I then sat down on a stone, unable to stand any longer, and my eyes overflowed with tears. I thanked God that in the course of my life He had taught me to know Him, that He sustained my life and took pity both on the insignificant creature and on the sinner that I was. I begged Him ardently that my life might be consecrated to the doing of His will. I felt His reply, which was that I should do His will from day to day, in humility and poverty, leaving Him, the Almighty God, to be the judge of whether I should sometime be called to bear witness more conspicuously. Then, slowly, the ecstasy left my heart; that is, I felt that God had withdrawn the communion which He had granted, and I was able to walk on, but very slowly, so strongly was I still possessed by the interior emotion. Besides, I had wept uninterruptedly for several minutes, my eyes were swollen, and I did not wish my companions to see me. The state of ecstasy may have lasted four or five minutes, although it seemed at the time to last much longer. My comrades waited for me ten minutes at the cross of Barine, but I took about twenty-five or thirty minutes to join them, for as well as I can remember, they said that I had kept them back for about half an hour. . . . I think it well to add that in this ecstasy of mine God had neither form, color, odor, nor taste; moreover, that the feeling of His presence was accompanied with no determinate localization. It was rather as if my personality had been transformed by the presence of a spiritual spirit. But the more I seek words to express this intimate intercourse, the more I feel the impossibility of describing the thing by any of our usual images. At bottom the expression most apt to render what I felt is this; God was present, tho invisible; He fell under no one of my senses, yet my consciousness perceived Him.' ”

One turns with deeper understanding, after reading these unusual descriptions of vivid spiritual experiences of men of modern times, to accounts of similar experiences described in the Old Testament. The language is different but the fundamental Reality both deal with seems to be the same. The Old Testament is full of such accounts. We have no reason to question their validity. They have a convincing ring of great sincerity about them. One turns, for example, to this account descriptive of a vision of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6: 1-8): "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; . . . with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. . . . Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for *mine eyes have seen the King: the Lord of hosts*. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, . . . and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, *here am I; send me.*"

There are two important elements which should be recognized in reading this account. First that it was a genuine experience, a mighty exalting Something did occur to Isaiah which he could only describe by saying he *saw God* "high and lifted up," and second, that the effect of this experience upon him was *ethical*! Mystical experiences are common to all religions. They are common to all kinds and conditions of men, good, bad and indifferent, in all ages. But the distinctive thing about all mystical experiences had by these Hebrews is that they came out of such experiences *feeling that they must do something about it. They must be better men. They must give themselves toward making human society more moral,*

*more just, humane and holy!* This point cannot be too strongly emphasized.

In India there are today, and have been for ages, seers, see-ers of all kinds of "mystical" visions. They become deliciously aware of the Unseen. They hear "voices." They go into trances that must be like some delightful drugged sleep, or lovely dream. They see form, line, color, harmony, a whole range of some kind of reality which to ordinary consciousness is unknown and apparently unknowable. But these mystical experiences do not affect them morally. They do not come out of such experiences feeling they are not ethically what they ought to be, feeling that things are not right morally in the social order in which they live, feeling that they must give themselves to lifting human life to higher levels of nobler and finer living, in keeping with the purity and holiness of the exalted God of righteousness whose "face" they have "seen." It is this ethical note which makes all such phenomena, reported by the Bible writers, utterly different from similar mystical experiences reported elsewhere. It is always the urgently ethical and beautifully spiritual note which is sounded throughout the Bible which makes of it the magnificent Book it is.

So far we have said little of the actual contents of the various books of the Old Testament. What are their main themes, dominant thoughts and motifs? To this we shall next, rather abruptly, turn.

#### THE VARIETY OF OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE

The writing which follows is by no means intended to be either formal in manner or comprehensive in treatment. In an exceedingly informal style an attempt will be made to give to the reader hastily sketched bits of samples of some of the Old Testament literature.

The book called Jonah is an excellent example of Biblical fiction-writing. The book was written for the purpose of

teaching a great moral truth. Fiction has always been a splendid vehicle for the imparting of moral and religious principles. It was frequently employed by Jesus. Many of His finest teachings were taught in parables, short stories, which might be aptly termed abbreviated works of fiction. Harriet Beecher Stowe's, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, probably had more to do with arousing the moral indignation of the North against slavery than all the speeches and sermons delivered on the subject. There is nothing irreligious about any people, ancient or modern, employing the story-teller's art to impress a moral truth.

The short novel called *Jonah*, was written for this purpose. It was written in a day when the Hebrew was very bigoted. The author of this work of fiction was trying to inform the Hebrew mind with a very great truth. Jonah hears the voice of God, telling him to go and preach to a people who live in a "foreign" city. It was very difficult to persuade those ancient Jews that God was the God of all peoples and that all men were linked together by common ties of mutual human need and human destiny. This idea is familiar to us, but to those ancient people it was startlingly new.

Note the manner in which the author uses fiction, unfolds and develops his plot, for the purpose of teaching a magnificent truth. The Voice keeps trailing Jonah, will not let him go. Jonah tries to run away from the Voice. He goes to sea. The sea to the mentality of those ancient Jews typified the farthest possible reaches of space. The Jew lived on a sea-coast but he never put out to sea. He was afraid of the sea. To his mentality it was a thing of terror and mystery, of forces he did not understand and with which he could not cope. Jonah thought he was beyond the hearing of the Voice, way out upon the sea. . . .

He was caught in a storm. The ship was about to go down. The terrified sailors, believing the vengeance of Jonah's God was pursuing them, threw Jonah overboard to save their own

lives and their ship. The waters closed over the frail swimmer. A sea monster lashed the waves, opened his enormous mouth and swallowed the little man who was struggling desperately with forces which were too great for his puny strength. After three days spent in the whale's belly the sea monster belched him up upon the shore.

It was impossible to elude the Voice. The Voice follows one—everywhere. No one can run away from God—no matter how far one may run. Vividly, convincingly the author of this quaint old book pursues his major theme. Jonah gives in. He goes to Nineveh warning the city of its impending doom if its people do not repent of their iniquity and turn to a way of righteousness. But the heart of the preacher is not in his message. After he realizes the city is to be spared he becomes embittered. He would like to see this city destroyed. It was the city of a foreign people who had frequently laid waste his native land.

Jonah was a narrow unforgiving patriot. Like all such patriots, then and now, he despised his foreign enemies. He sits under a vine outside the city walls, hoping he may yet have the satisfaction of seeing Nineveh destroyed. In this sulking, bitter mood, the Voice tells Jonah he should be ashamed of his hatred of this alien people. God does not feel toward them as Jonah does. These foreigners are His children. He cares for Jews but He cares also for others. Humanity is linked together in a common need and destiny.

In this quaint and queer old book of Jonah we have the first faint glimmerings within human thought of one of the greatest truths the mind of man has ever grasped—the common Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man!

The book called Ruth is an historical novel, one of the loveliest things ever written. It was written in another day when the Jew was bigoted. He looked upon all other races as inferior to his own. (A quite modern sort of racial psychology.) This scorn and prejudice prohibited the Jew from



marrying women of another race or religion. To break down this prejudice, some old Hebrew writer of fiction wrote "Ruth." It was written centuries after David was King. King David was looked back upon and venerated among those people as we venerate a great hero in our nation's past.

The writer of this superb story pointed out that a Hebrew had long ago married a foreign woman from Moab whose name was Ruth and that King David was a descendant of this woman. Here was precedent enough with which to change the bigoted thinking of the people of that day and to broaden their attitude toward foreign people. For the purpose for which it was written this novel was a master stroke, based on historical fact, woven into a story of surpassing lyrical beauty.

The book called Job is a drama of epic dignity and grandeur. It wrestles with profound questions. Is there a God, and if so how may I find Him? Is not God beyond our comprehension? If God is, is He good? Does He care? Is He concerned over what happens to us earthly creatures? Why does a good God permit evil and suffering? Many of the very latest arguments in our most up-to-date magazines and popular books written in defense of an agnostic philosophy, one will find quite clearly stated, and far better stated, in that ancient book of Job. To do it justice would require a lengthy treatment. Here we have only time to take a quick glance at it. The word tremendous is not too big to use in qualifying Job.

Some years ago the book was put on the stage, the characters quoting verbatim from the King James Version. The play made a deep impression and turned many to a reading of the Bible, which they had neglected for years as a sort of unconsciously felt waste of time. Some of them were amazed to find such epic grandeur and poignant, tragic beauty.

The book called Ecclesiastes is quite modern in its general feel and tone. The author engages himself with such questions as these: Is life really worth living? What is it all about? Is not the chief end of man to be found in the amass-

ing of money? Or is the quickening ecstasy of life discovered only in the pleasures of the flesh? Many centuries after Ecclesiastes was written, a noted Frenchman thought he was saying something very modern when he said all was delusion except the pleasure of woman—"that jar of violet wine set within the air." The writer of Ecclesiastes said these same things, asked these same questions—and many others like them—a long time ago.

The author of Ecclesiastes, cloyed with the futilities of the pleasures of the flesh, turned to the possibilities of other delights and asked other questions about life. He wondered if happiness could not be found in the eager quest of the mind to satisfy its insatiable desire to know? One tires so easily and so quickly of all other pursuits and life's emptiness is a thing of such depressing boredom and dull and bleak ennui. Is not the life of the mind the only really inexhaustible indulgence, whose pleasures never surfeit, whose beckoning horizons and far vistas are without end? He cannot bring himself to such a conclusion. Indeed he cannot bring himself to any conclusion except that there is no conclusion. God is beyond our knowledge and life is beyond our control. He is haunted always by the thought of the appalling emptiness and utter futility of life which the wise man will recognize and make the best of by enjoying life as much as it is possible to enjoy so vain and so empty a thing. After life there is only nothingness; we should enjoy existence as much as we can on this earth because after this there is only—the Dark.

This man was troubled because he had everything to live with and nothing to live for. He lived a long time before Jesus who taught that we must give ourselves to something greater than ourselves if we wish to find happiness. The roving, restless mind of the author of Ecclesiastes, weighted down with boredom, keeps asking his endless questions of life's endless futility. He wondered why when you want something you do not possess, it looks very attractive to you, but after you have

it, it turns to ashes in your hands, the glow and glamour go out of it, and you really do not care much about it after all?

One of the most popular books of recent years, widely quoted with a sort of pontifical gesture, is Mr. Walter Lippmann's *A Preface to Morals*. From it these words are quoted which sum up Mr. Lippmann's conclusions: "The mature man would take the world as it comes and within himself remain quite unperturbed. . . . He would face pain with fortitude, for he would have put it away from the inner chambers of his soul. . . . Since nothing gnawed at his vitals, neither doubt nor ambition nor frustration nor fear, he would move easily through life. And so whether he saw the thing as comedy, as high tragedy, or plain farce, he would affirm that it is what it is and that the wise man can enjoy it."\*

That is simply a modern rendering of much of the thought of the book of Ecclesiastes! The writer of Ecclesiastes was the Walter Lippmann of his day. He said what he said long before Mr. Lippmann said it, and said it far better. These modern paths of thinking which we of today seem convinced we are quite clever in expressing, are really very old paths trod long ago by ancient men, wiser than ourselves. The closing verses of Ecclesiastes were added to the original book by some later Hebrew editor of these sacred writings. The original book closed with verse eight of the last chapter, with these words, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And there that old Jew who wrote the original book, let the matter rest. . . .

Whoever has the impression that the Bible is a collection of dogmatic, obsolete writings is abysmally ignorant of its contents. Some of our modern writers seem to feel they have made a new discovery when, after cutting themselves loose from the convictions of religious faith, they begin to wonder over life's appalling emptiness and blurred futilities. Practically everything they say this old book has already said. The

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\*From Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals*. By permission of the Macmillan Company, publishers.

human heart is old. It has lived upon the earth a long time. It has thought about many things. Out of its gropings, blind follies and stupid frustrations there has come down to us across the ages a distilled essence of wisdom about the living of life. These insights have been won in the hard school of actual and long experience with life. The Bible, to be sure, is written in a quaint style, in language we today do not use. But it says things which are as vital today as they were the day they were first written. The Bible covers, pro and con, very nearly everything that has to do with our restless quest to discover life's meaning. In its pages one may still find the compelling Final Answer to the deepest questions life asks of itself. . . .

The book called Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings. It speaks of Wisdom as like a lovely woman, greatly to be desired, whom to know and possess will bring strength and happiness into one's life. It distinguishes between knowledge and wisdom. One may be brilliantly equipped with factual knowledge and yet have no real wisdom about life and how it ought to be lived. Such a man may make a success in life and yet make a mess of life. The book of Proverbs calls that kind of man a "fool." In different, quaint language it says many wise things. It is a book well worth serious reading and thought.

The Song of Solomon is an Oriental poem of passionate romance. The plot of the story is not easy to trace. Christian scholars have traced the following narrative through this ancient singing book. A simple country girl is seen and admired for her beauty by King Solomon. She is brought to the King's court and is robed in the finest of silks. In spite of the lavishing of costly things upon her and the flattery of the King's attentions, she refuses to yield herself to Solomon. Her heart is in the clean wind-swept hills where her simple shepherd lover keeps watch over his flocks. She returns to him as she had left him, with her virginal freshness. This old Hebrew love poem is warm with the quickening pulse of young life and is a thing of chaste loveliness. It is a romance of lyrical beauty and clean

ideals. Strained allegorical interpretations of it are another example of the manner in which the Bible has suffered at the hands of its friends.

There is a mass of material in the Old Testament which is devoted to the civil and criminal law of this ancient people. It is an interesting but highly specialized subject to trace the development of the system of jurisprudence under which this ancient Jew lived his life and regulated his social order. Just as we of the United States have borrowed heavily from the civil and criminal law of the older cultures of Europe, particularly the English, so these people fashioned many of their laws out of concepts and precedents established by the older civilizations around them.

In the Hebrew concept of government religion and politics, church and state, were one. These things were not separated in the thinking or practices of any ancient people. Indeed this separation, which we have observed in the United States since the founding of our nation but which was not observed in many of our pre-revolutionary colonies, is a concept of comparatively recent date. We find, therefore, in the Old Testament writings, alongside their civil and criminal laws, elaborate details of their ceremonial religious laws. These people, in common with all ancient people, practiced the rite of animal blood sacrifice in their elaborate religious observances. They observed special feast days and seasons. Many pages of the Bible are devoted to detailed instructions concerning priestly vestments, the manner in which animals are to be slaughtered, various parts of their bodies are to be disposed of, when observing these ancient religious rites.

For the technical student of such historical data these matters are of interest. For the average reader there is little moral edification or enlightenment to be found in them. Of important interest this fact should be held in mind: again and again the religion of the ancient Jew hardened into a system of priestcraft in which the ethical and spiritual note was almost en-

tirely obliterated. As a corrective for this tendency common among all peoples, the ancient prophets raised their voices in righteous protest reminding the people that true religion was a matter of lofty spirituality and ethics, that God was not a God who delighted in animal blood sacrifices or priestly ceremonialism, but He was a God of righteousness, justice and mercy who demanded that kind of living among men in their dealings with each other. Some of the books in the Old Testament which are wholly or partly devoted to matters of civil and criminal law and laws of religious ceremonialism are as follows: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. There are also some very interesting accounts of historical events in these books.

The books in the Old Testament dealing in whole or in part with historical events—accounts of wars, conquests, invasions, the reigns of kings and other such historical data are: the closing chapters of Genesis, Exodus (in part), Numbers (in part), Deuteronomy (in part), Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, Ezekiel (in part), Isaiah and Jeremiah (in part), and I and II Chronicles. The historical passages in the Bible are dependable. They are accounts of real human history, aflame with the passions and pathos of the human spirit at war forever with its world and with itself. There is no spot on earth so blood-soaked as Palestine. The armies of the world from time immemorial have marched and clashed there in battle. Napoleon's army was there over one hundred years ago. Allenby's army was there only a few years ago. The city of Jerusalem has suffered forty major sieges, been partly destroyed thirty-five times, totally destroyed four times. She bears in her aged body scars inflicted by man's immemorial hatred of his kind. One cannot stay for long in that tragic little land and fail to be reminded of man's persistent tendency to cover his fellows with mud and blood.

One hundred years ago, had one asked almost any reputable professor of history, in almost any leading university of the

world, what was the most ancient date in history of which one could be sure—his reply would have been 400 or at the most 500 B. C. Back of that one did not know what was legend, fiction or fact.\* In the last one hundred years this situation has been radically changed. What changed it belongs to the thrilling story of modern archeology. In the valley of the Nile the pyramids and temples of Egypt stood for hundreds of years before anyone knew who the people were who had built them, where they came from and where they went to, what happened to them and why. The same thing was true of the mounds of ancient cities along the Tigris-Euphrates Valley which were once the site of resplendent civilizations. The armies of Greece and of Rome marched past these ruins, but none in that day knew their full story. Europe, up to about one hundred years ago, knew, of course, these impressive ruins existed but no one knew their full story.

A somewhat parallel situation exists in our own Western Hemisphere. For centuries we have known there were ruins of ancient peoples in Mexico, South and Central America and in our own Southwest. Only recently have we begun to trace the story of the Aztecs, Mayas and other peoples once identified with our section of the world. This has come about through the diggings of modern archeologists. We do not yet know the full story of these people who have left impressive ruins of civilizations which perished for causes as yet unknown. Some day we shall know their history. When that full story is known it may radically change many of our prevailing ideas of ancient times, not only of the Western Hemisphere, but of Asia and of the world.

An engineer digging a foundation for a fort for Napoleon's army in Egypt in the 1790's accidentally dug up the Rosetta Stone, which later fell into the hands of the British. After decades of patient study of this stone scholars were able to

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\*See *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, by Ira Maurice Price, pp. 31, 32, etc.

find the key to the translation of the numerous inscriptions of the monuments of Egypt. Toward the early part of the past century a young British officer attached to the Persian Army discovered a great cliff covered with inscriptions done in parallel columns in several different languages. This cliff is called the Behistun Rock. It is in a region east of the Zagros Mountains of Persia. Painstakingly these inscriptions were copied and turned over to European scholars. Through this discovery the key was found for the translation of the cuneiform clay-tablet writings of the Babylonians, Assyrians and others. With these two discoveries modern historical criticism and archeological investigation began.

Once you get the key to the language of an ancient people, who left monumental inscriptions and buried libraries of written literature behind them, their story becomes an open book all may read and understand. In the past one hundred years archeology and historical research have pushed back our knowledge of authentic history to dates preceding 3000 B. C.—to events which occurred five thousand years ago. What has happened in this regard may be vividly put in the following manner. It is as though one had been standing in some vast cemetery and suddenly the graves opened; the dead came alive; great empires resumed their old places; armies automatically marshaled themselves as once they were, and the whole of that long dead and forgotten world was once more on the move, its history suddenly come alive. It has been like a man, knowing not a word of Russian, staring vacantly at a Russian newspaper held in his hands. Suddenly, as by some miracle, the Russian print jumps into English words, and the page, which before was an utter blank, comes now to be a page alive with accounts of stirring human events.

The Hebrew Bible now stands in its true historical setting. We know with great completeness the world-stage in which it was written. We now have over twenty-two times as much ancient indigenous literature dealing with the historical facts



of that world of antiquity, as is to be found in the writings of the Bible. Previous to this the Bible as an historical book hung suspended, as it were, in mid-air. Very little was known concerning the general world of which it, its land and people, were but a very small part.

This abundant historical knowledge, which the archeologist and historian have so patiently dug up, collected and translated in the last one hundred years, has, inevitably, profoundly altered many of our conceptions of the Bible. Wherever the Bible deals with history—names of kings and countries, military alliances and conquests—modern archeology has found the Biblical narratives dependable. Not once have the critics been able to discover a place in which the Bible, as it were, dated Christopher Columbus in the era of Abraham Lincoln or confused Henry Ford with Louis XIV of France. The Bible, to be sure, has many minor discrepancies and contradictions. In one place it will say three thousand men fought in a certain battle. In another place it will say thirty thousand instead of three thousand fought in the same battle. But such items are of negligible importance. There are no doubt some errors in the records of the War Department in Washington. For one who has an appreciation of history, the vivid Biblical accounts of political intrigues and the clash of armies are thrilling reading of the highest order.

When, however, the Bible deals with history it deals with it, as it does with every other subject it touches upon, from a moral viewpoint. It writes history from the viewpoint of religious interpretations, seeing in the shifting scenes of time the moral judgments of God. The God of righteousness, justice and truth is always the Hebrew God of battle and His judgments are terrible upon those who forget His High and Holy Name. The ancient Hebrew never loses sight of his conviction that the world is a moral order and the universe is on the side of Goodness. When there is no high moral and spiritual

vision the people always perish. This infallible truth runs all through the Bible.

The book called Psalms is the hymn-book of the old Temple, built by Solomon nearly three thousand years ago in Jerusalem. It is a collection of poems which was slowly compiled. No one man wrote them all. Many men wrote them across hundreds of years. There are some revolting expressions in this old hymn-book. Their war songs and prayers, breathing out the wrath and curse of high heaven upon their enemies, are quite harsh and disclose at the time they were written and sung in their services of religious worship, these people had a long way to go before attaining the lofty religious spirit of the greatest of their race. Jesus' teachings of magnanimous love for one's enemies stand quite in contrast to these earlier expressions. In one Psalm we are told, "blessed be those who dash the heads of the babes of Babylon against the stones." This was recited, no doubt, with deep feeling, reminiscent of the horrible things the Babylonians had done to them.

We moderns should not be too severe in our strictures upon the religious spirit of these ancient people. During the World War many of our Christian pulpits became platforms for war propaganda in which hatred was stirred up against our enemies and the most unbelievable things were said about them. Many a sermon was preached from Christian pulpits in every land in which terrible texts taken from these imprecatory Psalms were used in a viciously un-Christian manner. We moderns too have a long way to climb before we reach the moral and spiritual heights of the best that is in the Bible. These Psalms expressive of vengeance and hatred form only a small and almost negligible part of this ancient collection.

There is nothing more beautiful in its expression of simple faith than Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd. . . ." Millions have had its accents bring healing to our hurts when in the grip of experiences which shake and sometimes break the human heart. Many millions, in many different languages,

have murmured with faltering lips, when they came to the Gate in the Mist, "Yea, tho I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . ." and have been sustained by its assurance. The Book of Psalms is like a music heard in some vast cathedral whose tones touch time with Eternity . . . "Like as a Father pitieth his children so . . . God pities us . . . for He knows our frame, He remembers that we are . . . dust." "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! . . . When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" "Who shall stand before Thy Presence. . . . He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; and hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity." Has the eternality of God, contrasted with the frailty and pitiable brevity of man ever been put in loftier tones than these, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God! . . . For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. . . . We spend our years as a tale that is told. . . . So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. . . . Let thy purposes appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. . . ."

The Old Testament is like a vast mountain range. There are foothills in it. But there are high peaks where the view of far vistas lifts one's very soul into the Presence of the Eternal. Nowhere are the altitudes higher than in the books bearing the names of the great preachers of individual and social righteousness. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Malachi and the others dealt with themes of perennial importance to the welfare and happiness of mankind. These men preached not only individual, but social, righteousness and justice, in

words which are ethically and spiritually far in advance of our time. To survey in even a cursory fashion the writings in the Old Testament bearing the names of these ancient Jewish preachers would require a large book. These men were human instruments used of God for a revelation of eternal truth. They spoke the infallible and tremendous Word. The Word they uttered was this Word: *God is; God is just, righteous and merciful and He demands justice, righteousness and mercy among men!* This is the Word of God, to man, found in that collection of inspired writings which is called the Old Testament. When man in any age ignores or defies this Word, he brings ruin upon himself. The Lord of hosts, the Holy One of Israel, the Mighty God hath spoken it!

There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament. In this brief account of the variety of Old Testament literature we have attempted to give only hastily sketched bits of glimpses into the depth and range of this incomparable collection of sacred writings whose influence has profoundly blessed the world. In this brief survey we have not mentioned all the books of the Old Testament nor has any attempt been made to give a comprehensive account of those which have been mentioned. We shall turn next to a very interesting question.

#### CLOSING THE LIST OF BOOKS

The ancient Jew wrote many other books which never found their way into our Old Testament collection. Some of these books have been lost. We have no copies of them. Archeological investigations in Palestine may discover fragments or whole copies of these lost books, but this is quite unlikely. We know these books existed and were once highly valued because they are frequently referred to by Old Testament writers who cite them as the recognized authority from which they derived much of their information. The names of some of these lost books are: The Book of Jasher, The Book of the Wars of

Jahveh, The History of Samuel the Seer, The History of Nathan the Prophet, The Book of the Acts of Solomon, The History of Shemiah the Prophet and of Iddo the Seer, the Commentary of the Book of the Kings, The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

Archeological investigations are moving at a rapid pace in Palestine since the British occupation. If copies of these ancient lost books, which were once used as authorities for much of the writing of the Old Testament, were discovered another thrilling chapter would be added to our present knowledge of the origins of Biblical literature. It is difficult for those who have never visited these archeological diggings to realize the thrill which comes at the moment of their significant discoveries. A spade hits some object. With infinite patience, using tiny camel's-hair brushes, the archeologists uncover some ancient object. The workmen gather around, looking on with tense expectation. The scholar in charge quietly announces the important nature of his find. A shout goes up! The ignorant native diggers do not understand what it is all about, but the scholars know another significant detail has been added to the story of man's life upon the earth.

There is another group of ancient Hebrew writings which were not lost but which are not included in our Old Testament. There are fourteen of these books. They are called the Apocrypha. In the Roman Catholic Bible they are given a much higher place than in our Protestant Bible. In addition to the Apocrypha there is yet another collection of old Jewish sacred writings, included in what is called the Pseudepigrapha, copies of which have survived. This large body of ancient Hebraic literature might be justly termed the Larger Old Testament. Some of this literature is of a very high order, quite equal to anything in our Old Testament. Some of it is morally and spiritually superior to much that is in our canonical list.

We shall deal more fully with the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha in the next chapter.

One wonders why these particular books in our Old Testament were selected. Why did this specific list come to be looked upon as unusually sacred? Who did this, when, where and why? This question cannot be answered with dogmatic certainty as to exact details. There are different accounts as to how this came about. The facts indicate that many elements entered in and the process by which this was done was one in which many factors slowly converged upon several slightly differing conclusions. A general outline of what took place follows.

We write and print thousands of books annually. Some live. Most of them die. Those that live are the ones which have the deepest and most persistent appeal to us. They illuminate our minds; they touch our better nature; they enrich and ennoble our lives. Thus all books go through a process of selection and survival of the fittest. It was in this way the ancient Jew selected, from and among many other books, the particular collection which has come down to us in our Old Testament. The books which appealed to him the most he read and cherished the most and came to attach a feeling of special importance to them and reverence for them. After using them in his religious services of worship, along with much else, he began to attach a special sacredness to them.

There was division of opinion among the Jewish religious leaders on this subject. Some of the Jews wanted to exclude, and for a long time did exclude, the book called Song of Solomon. Some objected to the book called Esther because it does not even mention the word God. They said it was not a book with any religious teachings in it. Finally there came a time when the leading Jewish Rabbis decided their list of especially revered books must be closed. They realized they could not keep on adding indefinitely to their sacred collection. Their people were prolific writers. A dead line had to be drawn somewhere. In one account we are told the leading Jewish rabbis of the day held two councils, one in the year 90 A. D., the other

in the year 118 A. D. (Note both these dates come years after the life and time of Jesus.) These councils were held at a place called Jabne, or Jamnia, not far south of Joppa on the Mediterranean seacoast. Here they debated the matter at length, and decided, so many Protestant scholars claim, upon the exact thirty-nine books which are in our Protestant Old Testament. Other, equally learned, Jewish and Roman Catholic scholars dispute this. Many conflicting claims are made as to just when, where and by what ancient Jewish authority a final list of Old Testament books was decided upon. The following is quoted from Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*\* (a monumental scholarly work), the article on the Bible, page 569 of Volume II:

"The real conclusion of the Old Testament belongs to the sixty years or so between the fall of Jerusalem and the rising under Bar Cochba (A. D. 132-135). It was part of the general settlement brought about by the commanding influence of the group of Rabbis headed by Rabbi Akiba. The settlement in the case of the Canon was based upon existing usage, which was at last formally sanctioned and defined by the religious leaders of the nation. The work by which this was done was necessarily retrospective; it was a process of reflection based on reasoning and issuing in a decision that had the force of a dogma. The reasoning comes out clearly for the first time in a well known passage of Josephus† (c. Apion. i. 8), where the prophetic inspiration is traced down to the time of Artaxerxes (B. C. 465-424; but Josephus appears to mean Ahasuerus or Xerxes; cf. Ryle, Canon, p. 161n.); books written before this date were inspired, but not those written beyond it. There were differences of opinion as to the limit, and there was a good deal of faulty criticism abroad, the real date of many books being forgotten; but the principle of authority co-extensive with inspiration was defi-

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\*Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, and quoted by permission.

†Jewish scholar, historian, adventurer and soldier of fortune, who was born in the first century A. D. and wrote a thrillingly interesting, but not always dependable, history of his people.

nately affirmed. In the same passage we have the first enumeration of the sacred books, which are equal in number with the (22) letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Here again we may see at work the speculations of the Rabbis. According to another reckoning which prevails in the Talmud, the number of the books was twenty-four, Ruth being separated from Judges, and Lamentations from Jeremiah. According to yet another, there were twenty-seven in all, which were still equal to the Hebrew alphabet, the five final letters being added for the double books. Such learned trifling was characteristic of the time; it was the way in which the Jewish mind sought to give expression to its idea of permanence and law inherent in the nature of things.

"In the meantime, the close connection between Jerusalem and Alexandria, which had continued so long as Palestine remained a province of Egypt (to about B. C. 198), though it did not entirely cease, was loosened, and the Greek-speaking, or Hellenistic Jews, whose greatest strength was in Egypt, went on a way of their own, not regulated by the schools of the Rabbis. In the copies of the Greek Old Testament an arrangement of the books, differing somewhat from that of the Hebrews and more according to subject, was adopted; and other edifying books were added more freely to the older collection. Thus arose the fuller Alexandrian Canon, which was taken over in the main by the Christian Church when it broke with Judaism.

"Thus it appears that the full conception of the Old Testament Canon as a strictly circumscribed collection of sacred books was the ultimate result of a process spread over a long period. The strict circumscription was in the first instance peculiar to the Jews, from whom it was taken over (though in a qualified sense) by St. Jerome\* and it was revived by the divines of the Reformed Church in the sixteenth century."

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\*The Latin Church scholar who in the 400's A. D. translated *The Vulgate*, one of the earliest and most authentic translations, into Latin of the Bible, for the use of the Christian Church. *The Vulgate* list of Old Testament books differs from our English Protestant Bible.



We are profoundly grateful for the way in which the Bible has been preserved for us across thousands of years. We see impressive evidences of the guiding of the Unseen Hand in this whole historical process. We also see a too insistently literalistic interpretation of the Bible is an artificial device which was superimposed upon the Bible and which has done injustice to it.

JESUS' USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND OTHER  
SACRED WRITINGS OF HIS PEOPLE

How did Jesus regard the sacred writings of His people which are included in our Old Testament? He greatly revered these books. He also held in reverence many other writings which are not included in our Old Testament collection. There is considerable misunderstanding among many Christian people on this point. Jesus never shackled His mind nor sought to circumscribe the minds of His followers with any extremely literalistic interpretation of the Old Testament; nor did He confine His reverence for sacred writings to the Old Testament alone to the narrow exclusion of noble teachings found in other writings. A clearer understanding of the mind of Jesus on this point will liberate our thought from an extreme literalistic interpretation of the Bible. Jesus never sought "to bind men with a text but to liberate them with a truth." Some, indeed, of His most widely quoted words are taken from other sacred writings and traditional teachings which are not in our Old Testament.

The writings referred to are in the Rabbinical lore of the Jew, the oral and written tradition called the Mishna. Recall, for example, Jesus' teaching about taking a mote out of your brother's eye and overlooking a beam in your own eye,\* and compare that with this Mishna teaching written by Rabbi Tarphon: "If he (the reprover) say to him, Take the mote from thine eyes, the other replies, Take the beam from thine eyes."

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\*Matthew 7:3-5.

Jesus' saying, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you,"\* is taken word for word from the Mishna, Jesus' teaching, "Every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,"† is much like these words in the Mishna, of Rabbi Shimeon ben Lakish: "He that committeth adultery with his eyes is also to be called an adulterer." Jesus' teaching that the swearing of elaborate oaths was unnecessary, that a simple "yea" or "nay" was quite sufficient,‡ is much like Rabbi Eliezer's, "Yea is an oath and nay is an oath." Jesus' teaching that when one gives to the poor one should not give to be seen of men,\*\* is closely akin to this from the Mishna: "He who ostentatiously gives alms to the poor . . . for this, God will bring him to judgment." Certainly the splendid undertone of some of the finest things Jesus said is found also in such Mishna passages as these: "How doth it affect the Holy One . . . whether a man eat food unclean or clean"; "Alms giving and good works outweigh all the commandments in the Law"; "They who are insulted yet insult not again, who hear themselves reproached yet answer not again."

From a book called Ecclesiasticus, which is not in our Old Testament, this appears, "Judge of thy neighbor by thyself," which is the Golden Rule stated in another form. This also appears, "Forgive thy neighbor the hurt he hath done to thee, so shall thy sins be forgiven when thou prayest," from which, Jesus probably drew the great thought expressed in the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Note also this, quoted from "The Wisdom of Solomon" (which is not in our Old Testament): "The pure shall live with God," and compare it with Jesus' words, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

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\*Matthew 7:2.

†Matthew 5:28.

‡Matthew 5:34-37.

\*\*Matthew 6:1-4.

It is a great pity that this book, held sacred by the Jews in Jesus' day, is not included in our Old Testament. It was written in the most classic Greek style. In it are such magnificent passages as these, "Righteousness is immortal," "For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity," "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and there shall no torment touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died, And their departure is accounted to their hurt, And their going from us to mean their destruction, But they are at peace, and their hope is full of immortality." Paul's faith in the immortality of the soul, expressed in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, was undoubtedly nourished by such expressions as that, taken from Jewish sacred books not included in our Old Testament.

It is quite clear that Jesus held in reverence many of the sacred Jewish writings which are not included in our Canon. What is in our collection and much that is not, Jesus quoted freely and frequently, and drew inspiration from for many of His finest teachings. Jesus' use of the Old Testament was a free and joyous use; His mind was never shackled by the inflexible rigidities of literalistic interpretations. As a matter of fact, it was largely because He challenged the inflexible adherence to "the letter of the sacred law," championed by the Scribes and Pharisees of His day, that they finally seized Him and had Him done to death!

There are well-meaning but mistaken people who quote Jesus' sayings, "not one jot or tittle of the law would pass away" and "I came not to destroy but to fulfill the law," to substantiate extremely literalistic interpretations of the Old Testament. Such Bible texts must be read in the light of Jesus' statement in which—in summing up His conception of the whole meaning and significance of the Old Testament—He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and

great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Jesus believed the Old Testament was divinely inspired. It is difficult for me to see how any open-minded person can read its great passages and not see the same thing. But there is no warrant, in anything Jesus ever taught, for strapping our minds to an inflexible Biblical literalism. These Holy Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation were given to us by God not to chain our thinking but to emancipate our life that we might know more completely—the Way and the Life.

It was sixty-three years before Jesus was born when the Roman army first swept over Palestine. Tradition tells us when Pompey's legions seized the Temple in Jerusalem, their commander stalked through the inner court until he paused with curiosity before the curtain of the Holy of Holies. He was familiar with pagan temples with their statues of Greek and Roman gods. Expecting to see another such image, he drew back the curtain and stood transfixed with amazement when he beheld . . . nothing! Pompey's mind could not grasp the Jewish conception of an unseen God!

How it was possible for this ancient race to produce a literature embodying truth that is permanently essential to the welfare and happiness of mankind confronts us with one of the strangest mysteries of history. Through the mind of this people the light of moral monotheism first dawned across our world. Through the influence of this written literature that light has been maintained across the ages. If we are not convinced that God spoke through this ancient race, we do not believe very earnestly in God. The Word of God is in those older rolls of parchment. "In the year that King Uzziah died"—and in other years—the Spirit of God came upon them and His Word was spoken through them. When we make such a statement, we but state a fact, not the explanation of it. "Our

best explanations do not go far; the residue of mystery is great." The fact itself stands out far greater and more compelling than any of our explanations of it. Before that fact we stand in awe with bowed heads and humbly grateful and reverent hearts. . . .

## CHAPTER II

### THE LATER ROLLS OF PARCHMENT

#### FOUR HUNDRED YEARS

It MUST be apparent to the most careless reader of the Bible when one steps out of the Old and into the New Testament one has passed abruptly from one world into another. The intellectual climate has changed. Dominant characteristics of thinking are different. We are familiar with the Old and New Testament writings bound together in what appears to be—to the uncritical reader—one single book. Nothing could be more misleading and erroneous than such a conception. There is a great difference between the general background in which the Old Testament was written and that of the New. Four hundred years had come and gone between the writing of the Old and the beginning of the writing of the New Testament.\*

Four hundred years is a long time. Four hundred years ago—it was just beginning to dawn in the mind of Europe that the world was not flat but round, that the reports of Columbus' discovery of a new continent were really true. What changes have occurred in these past four hundred years! Changes as far-reaching occurred during the four hundred years between the close of Old Testament and the opening of New Testament times. We have no record in our Bible of the events of this period. If we wish to understand the background of the New Testament we must learn outside of the Bible, what happened during those four "silent centuries." Where do we turn to find this information? To Greek and Roman historians, and most of all, to the prolific writings of the Jews themselves.

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\*The Old Testament book, Daniel, is an exception. It was probably not written until about 165 B. C.

During these four hundred years the Jew kept right on writing. What he wrote is divided by scholars into two main groups, the Apocrypha and Psuedepigrapha, to which a passing reference was made in the preceding chapter. The Apocrypha consists of a collection of fifteen books, which has in whole or in part been at some time included by the Jewish and Christian Church in the Bible. The Hebrew canon of Scripture excluded it; the Greek version, or Septuagint, included it. The Catholic Church includes it in its version, and all the earlier English translators of the Protestant Church retained it, even the earliest edition of the Authorized Version containing the Apocrypha. Then it came under discussion in the Puritan Era, and was by the Westminster Confession placed under the ban. Still, however, it continued to be included in many later editions, until by vote of the British Bible Society it was finally excluded in 1827.

The reasons for this varied treatment are not consistent or clear, but this final exclusion of the Apocrypha seems to have been based upon the idea that its books are inferior to our Old Testament, coming out of a period when divine revelation had ceased. Such a view is untenable, for there is much of moral and spiritual value in these books; and we now know how large a part they played in shaping the thought and language of our New Testament writers. The names of the books of the Apocrypha are as follows: I Esdras, II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Appendix to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Epistle of Jeremy, Song of the Three Children, History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasses, I Maccabees, II Maccabees.

“The Pseudepigrapha is a collection of books which never found its way into the canon, but was much read by the Jewish people in this period, and had a profound influence. Its quoted words and phrases fill our whole New Testament, even more than those of the Apocryphal books. Its name is derived from the fact that these are

writings under an assumed name. The majority of these books are apocalyptic\* in character. The chief reason for their pseudonymity is that the canon of the Prophets was closed about 200 B. C., and by this act inspiration was officially declared at an end. So any books of prophetic style or nature written after this date had to be written under the names of earlier Jewish leaders to give them any currency or acceptance. Daniel was the first of these pseudonymous books; which, after much discussion, was admitted to the canon. But the other pseudepigrapha were never recognized by the Jewish Church. The names of the twelve books in this collection are as follows: III Maccabees, Book of Jubilees, Psalms of Solomon, Letter of Aristaeas, IV Maccabees, I Enoch, II Enoch, Sibylline Oracles, II Esdras, II Baruch, Assumption of Moses, Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs.

"Taking this literature as a whole—Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha—it will be found easier to understand it if we reclassify it on the basis of literary character into the new grouping which follows:

1. Classification of Literature of Period of Connections.†

- (1) Law  
Talmudic. Codes and Commentaries—  
"Mishna" and "Gomara."
- (2) History  
I Maccabees  
I Esdras
- (3) Legend and Fiction  
Talmudic Legends and Stories—"Haggada"  
Tobit  
Judith  
Appendix to Esther  
History of Susanna  
Bel and The Dragon

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\*Full of predictions and mighty hopes of the supernatural appearance of a Messiah from out of the clouds, backed by armies of angels who will overthrow their conquerors and oppressors and establish the supremacy of the Jew upon the earth—the Kingdom of God.

†The four hundred years under discussion.



- II Maccabees
- III Maccabees
- (4) Poetry
  - I Baruch
  - Song of The Three Children
  - Psalms of Solomon
  - Prayer of Manasses
- (5) Didactic Literature
  - Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Sirach)
  - Letter of Aristeas
  - Epistle of Jeremy
  - Wisdom of Solomon
  - Book of Jubilees
  - IV Maccabees
- (6) Apocalypse
  - Testaments of XII Patriarchs
  - Sibylline Oracles
  - I Enoch (Ethiopic Book of Enoch)
  - Assumption of Moses
  - II Enoch (Slavonic Book of Enoch or Secrets of Enoch)
  - II Baruch (Apocalypse of Baruch)
  - II (or III) Esdras (Apocalypse of Ezra)\*\*

The above is listed with no intention of examining this literature but only in order that the reader may have clearly brought before him that there is a considerable body of such Jewish writings, knowledge of which does throw great light upon the world stage we are just here engaged in resetting.

As contrasted with the Old Testament one encounters many new elements in the New Testament. There is a whole system of devilology and angelology in the background of the Jewish mind of New Testament times, not found in Old Testament times. There is a dominant belief in demons, devils, the Devil, Satan. There is also a new, powerful institution, the synagogue. There are new personal types, Scribes, Pharisees,

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\*Quoted by permission from *The Bridge Between the Testaments*, by Henry Kendall Booth. A trustworthy book, written in a clear readable style. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Sadducees. There is an ecstatic Messianic hope, the expectation of the coming from out of the clouds of a Messiah. There is the political party called the Zealots. There is a new and glowing phrase, standing in the Jewish mind for a tremendous impending, cataclysmic event, "The Kingdom of God." There is a fervent expectation that the end of the world is at hand, a vast catastrophe which is to come smashing through space obliterating the world and all things earthly and familiar to man. These things were widely and wildly discussed in that day. There is excited talk about the Judgment Day, when the souls of all men are to be judged: the righteous are to go into everlasting bliss; the unrighteous are to go into everlasting torment. There is a widespread belief in the immortality of the soul. This belief was identified with what they termed the resurrection of the dead. . . .

There is exceedingly little, or almost nothing, of these ideas to be found in the Old Testament. From where had these new conceptions come? They came during these four hundred years. The development of many of these beliefs and tremendous expectations are found in that Jewish literature which is listed above. It is not clear whether or not the Old Testament Hebrew believed in immortality, or had ideas concerning the resurrection of the body. There are a few passages in the Old Testament which indicate he did have such beliefs. There are far more passages which indicate he did not have such beliefs. Many of these ideas grew within the growing mind of the Jew during these four hundred years; many were borrowed during his wider contacts with other peoples of other cultures and religions.

The Old Testament comes to a close with the Hebrew under the rule of Persia. Babylon had conquered and carried the Hebrew into exile in Babylonia. Archeologists have recently dug up the ancient capitol of Babylonia. It was a magnificent city; its ruins suggest that in its day it must have been as imposing as London or Paris is today. The palace in which Bel-

shazzar's feast was held (mentioned in the book of Daniel) has been unearthed. It is an uncanny feeling to walk upon the very stones of the vast halls, banqueting and throne rooms of that palace. One night when the gates of the city were closed and watchmen paced the high walls surrounding the city, the king held an elaborate feast. There were music, wine, song, semi-nude dancing girls waving gossamer veils. At midnight when the carousing in the palace was at its height, a Persian army, which had stood waiting in the night-shadowed plains, crashed the gates of the city and came pouring in! It was so that Babylon fell and Persia gained mastery over most of that ancient world.\*

Under the Persians the Hebrews were allowed to return to Palestine. Many went back. Many more never did go back. They liked Babylon too well. They were living in the New York City of their day. They had much greater opportunities in Babylon. They were making money as merchants. Many had risen in the learned professions or in government civil service to high positions of trust and responsibility. And so a large and influential group of Jews remained permanently in Babylon, loyal to their religion, but intellectually stimulated by their wider contacts with this more highly developed civilization. The Babylonian Jews kept in touch with the Palestinian Jews ever afterward.

Many elements not found in the Old Testament, but which are encountered in the New Testament, came into the thinking of the Jews, during these four hundred years, from the influence of those Babylonian Jews. And since it was Persia that had conquered Babylon it was Persian thought and belief that slowly came filtering into the minds of many Jews. It is from this Persian influence that the belief expressed in the New Testament in demons, devils, the Devil, came. In Mesopotamia

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\*See Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* VII, 5. 3. Xenophon's accounts of the fall of Babylon are held to be legendary by some authorities. In any event Babylon was conquered by Persia and the life and lot of the Jew was thereby greatly changed.

today there is a religious sect, a strange descendant of ancient Persian Zoroastrianism, called Yezides, which means "devil worshippers." They believe "the Prince of Darkness" now has the upper hand in world affairs and therefore the correct thing to do is to worship and appease him, get along with him the best one can.

The devil came into our Bible from out of ancient Persia. There is nothing for one to be startled about in discovering such a fact. The ancient Jew did not live in a vacuum. It was inevitable that his thinking should be influenced by contact with other peoples. Doctor Fosdick writes, in concluding his discussion of the New Testament belief in the devil:

"Does that mean, then, that Christians must always so phrase their experiences of human evil and their convictions about it? To answer in the affirmative is to shut the door of Christianity against intelligence, for while an intelligent mind may well refuse to claim omniscience by denying the theoretical possibility that evil spirits exist, no intelligent mind can possibly go back across the centuries and enter into demonology as an habitual, inevitable, comprehensive category of explanation for sin and misery. What we have in ancient demonology is a transient phrasing of abiding experiences. Once men explained eclipses of the sun by saying that a dragon swallowed it. We know better now, but because we no longer believe in that old explanation we have not thereby got rid of the sun's eclipses. So we surrender the old category of demonology as a means of scientific explanation but, for all that, the age-long eclipse of man's life in sin and misery is as much of a fact and as terrible a fact as ever it was. Everything the devil and his hosts ever meant is with us yet."\*

In the 300's B. c. Alexander the Great—not yet thirty years of age—conquered his world. Persia and things Persian fell

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\*From Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible*. By permission of the Macmillan Company, publishers.

before him. For hundreds of years Greek culture was dominant. At the north end of the Nile Valley a city was built to memorialize the conqueror who died in a drunken debauch. It was named Alexandria. It is so called to this day. It is still the chief port of Egypt. In the period we are sketching it boasted a lighthouse whose rays could be seen far out upon the sea; an elaborate park and boulevard system; the greatest library of antiquity and a splendid university. Learning and art were given every encouragement. The Greek rulers invited Jewish scholars to come to Alexandria. Many came making this city their permanent home. These Jews kept in touch with their people in Palestine. And so it came to pass that peculiarly Greek conceptions began to take shape in the growing Jewish mind. This explains the presence of distinctively Greek ideas which are missing in the Old Testament but which are present in the New Testament. Babylon, Persia and Greece put their hands upon the Jewish mind during this four-hundred-year period. These elements influenced the Hebrew mind but they never completely dominated it.

It was not only from the Jewish colony in Alexandria that Greek influence came into Palestine. The Greeks ruled Palestine itself and their culture threatened completely to Grecianize the Jew. Sensing this danger, protective steps were taken to resist the inundation of the faith of their Fathers. Finally, goaded to exasperation by their Greek conquerors, the Jews arose in armed rebellion. This revolt was led by the Maccabees. In 143 B. C. the Greeks were expelled from Palestine and the Jew became a free man ruling his own land.

He did not long remain free. Internal strife developed between two rival groups—the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisee stood for absolute separation from all foreign influence. The Sadducee believed in a cultural adjustment and assimilation. From his viewpoint the Pharisees were intensely narrow in their fanatical opposition to accepting the situation of foreign influence. The Sadducee was a “practical” man. He

heartily approved a strong power at the helm of government. What mattered it if the power were foreign so long as law and order were maintained? He liked the teachings of the Greek Stoics that men were masters of their fate. He opposed the Pharisee in many matters of religious belief. He denied the resurrection of the body and belief in the immortality of the soul. From his viewpoint such beliefs were contrary to Old Testament teachings. He denied the oral and traditional religious law of the Jew. He liked to observe Greek festivals and attend the Greek theater. He thought he made a dashing figure wearing a Greek toga. He prided himself upon his ability to copy the Greek styles of dress. All of which was anathema to the Pharisee, a base betrayal of his race.

The Sadducee was an adroit politician; the Pharisee a narrow-minded religionist. The Sadducee was apt to be lax in morality; the Pharisee was ridiculously meticulous in his observance of ritual customs. The Sadducee was open-minded and liberal in his thinking; the Pharisee was extremely narrow and ultraconservative.

It was inevitable that these two groups should clash. They did clash and the bitter wranglings and dark plotting intrigues which existed between these two strong parties resounded not only throughout little Palestine, but in far off Babylon and Alexandria and wherever the Jew had been scattered over that whole ancient world.

The bitterness between these two groups came to such a pass that their native land fell an easy prey to the clever scheming of a foreign adventurer named Herod who ingratiated himself into the good graces of Rome. Pompey, at the head of a Roman army, moved into Syria. Powerful Jewish factions, bent upon destroying each other, appealed to Pompey for help with the result that, in the year 63 B. C., Palestine became a conquered Roman province.\* After Rome came she

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\*See Chapter I, *History and Literature of the New Testament*, by Henry Thatcher Fowler, the Macmillan Company, publishers.

stayed. She remained for centuries, until the whole Empire finally collapsed.

Rome granted considerable autonomy to the Jews, protected and respected the rights of the Jewish Sanhedrin. This court was composed of both Pharisees and Sadducees. One pictures their dark looks as they sat together in the Jewish Sanhedrin, which was a sort of combination of Senate, Supreme Court and their highest ecclesiastical authority. One hears their whisperings in secret places. One sees them moving about in their stealthy intrigues. Always in the background are the marching legions of Rome, the pomp and power of a world Empire; the oppression and yearning hopes of a proud but once more enslaved people. If one sees and feels these things—what would otherwise be tedious history comes alive and the hot breath and tense pitch of excitement of a day that is dead is upon one in all its original vividness.

The Scribes were closely akin to the Pharisees. They were lawyers, scholars and teachers. They were the intellectual aristocracy of their day. They were hailed in public places with the honored title, "Rabbi! Rabbi!" They copied the ancient law of Moses and wrote voluminous interpretations of it. For example: the Mosaic law prohibited the doing of any work on the Sabbath. The Scribes pondered the exact meaning of that one word "work." They wrote thus—is the laying of an egg by a hen on the Sabbath day work, and if so is it lawful to eat an egg which was so laid? This seems absurd to us. Such cautious reasoning was not absurd to them. In their ability to cite proof-texts and split theological hairs the Scribes have had few equals. These men, so powerful in their day, thoroughly sincere, adamant in their insistence upon the observance of the very letter of the orthodox law of the faith of their Fathers, gave Jesus much trouble. For an intelligent grasp of New Testament times one must see these powerful Scribes standing prominently in the picture.

There are two other groups of this period who must be

understood: the Essenes and the Zealots. They were both split-offs from the Pharisee party. They were both intensely patriotic, anti-foreign, pro-Jewish, meticulously orthodox and narrow in their religious beliefs. They are fascinating types. I am tempted to devote too much space to them.

Briefly, the Essenes were the ascetics of their day, who withdrew from the world, despaired of changing things by human or natural means. Living in monastic rigor and simplicity in solitary places they gave themselves to prayer that God would miraculously intervene in behalf of the downtrodden Jew, send the Messiah out of the clouds with an army of angels, and so, with blood and fury supernatural, drive the Roman conquerors out of the land, and establish the supremacy of the Jew, the Kingdom of God on earth! For this the Essenes prayed daily looking expectantly toward the sky . . . for the Great Miracle to happen. They believed God would do supernaturally what helpless Jews were powerless to accomplish. There are some who think Jesus was probably closely affiliated with these Essenes when He was quite young. Be that as it may, these Essenes stood for a conception of the Kingdom of God with which Jesus had to reckon when He began His public teachings.

The Zealots were also an offshoot from the Pharisee element. To the Zealot the prayers and miraculous expectancies of the Essenes were pious futility. The Zealot also felt the Pharisee was wasting his time by making complaints to the government. He believed the Jew must solve his problem by direct action. He should stop dreaming and act! He should secretly raise and train a revolutionary army. With this instrument the Zealots intended to drive their Roman masters out of Palestine as the Maccabees had driven the Greeks out two hundred years earlier.

The Zealot proposed to meet force with force and with the help of God thus to establish throughout the world the supremacy of the Jew, which to him meant "the Kingdom of God"



on earth. It was a great dream of fevered fire and insane hope. Secretly they would meet and plan and plot and organize and agonize and work themselves up to a pitch of wild revolutionary fervor. Were they not God's Chosen People? Would not the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob support with His mighty approval their mad heroic effort in behalf of the Great Cause? These Zealots gave Rome a great deal of trouble long before and long after New Testament times. They fomented repeated insurrections.

It was a forlorn remnant of these people who perished in that scene of horror on the summit of Masada, to which reference was made in a previous chapter. The whole background of New Testament times is filled with this revolutionary specter and strife. Jesus had to deal with this situation. He became entangled in it and was the innocent victim of it. He opposed the "Kingdom of God" conceptions of the dominant groups of His day. This opposition cost Him His life. But of that we shall treat later. . . .

Many things happened to the Jew during the four hundred years between the close of Old Testament and the opening of New Testament times. This brief sketch of this period has sought to be suggestive—and by no means comprehensive.

#### THE STORY OF THE ACTUAL WRITING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

We shall deal with the life and teachings of Jesus in a later chapter. Here we are concerned with the origin of the New Testament which, of course, did not come into being until after the time of Christ.

The conversion of Paul to Christianity, following his vision of the Risen Christ, gave a powerful impetus to the Christian movement. Paul possessed an intellect of the highest order. Under the impress of his spacious mind Christianity was saved from degenerating into a petty Jewish sect and was made universal in its appeal. Paul was a liberal of his day. He

had trouble with some of the Jerusalem Christians who insisted upon the observance of the strict letter of the law of the religious faith of their fathers. Paul "withstood Peter to his face," because Peter had condemned Paul's liberal attitude on such fundamentalist Jewish teachings as circumcision. Peter looked upon Paul's views as dangerously heretical, which if not checked would wreck their Christian faith.

At the very beginning of Christianity we find good men in vehement disagreement over the essentials of the faith. This controversy fills many pages of our New Testament. It is fortunate that Paul's more liberal interpretation finally prevailed. Had not this occurred Christianity would have become a narrow-minded Jewish sect and would have disappeared completely. This in fact did happen to the Jewish wing of early Christianity. It passed away completely and within a century or so the Christian movement was entirely in the hands of that more broad-minded Gentile world to whom history's Tomorrow belonged. The wisdom of Paul was vindicated by Time, that stern judge who is forever sitting in judgment upon all our systems of thought. Historical movements which fail to progress are doomed by the Hand of God.

These early Christians, like all Christians of every age, were children of their time. In their thinking there were passing and permanent concepts of belief. We need not be surprised—we should indeed expect it—when we find elements in our New Testament that are of merely passing and not of permanent significance. In the thinking of nearly all of these first-century Christians, the end of the world was almost momentarily expected. They were mistaken in holding such a belief. The world did not come to an end in their time, nor has it come to an end since their time. Parenthetically it might be inserted that to this day there are groups of Christians who are confidently predicting the end of the world is near at hand. They base their beliefs on end-of-the-world passages in the New Testament.

Such reasoning is another incident of the manner in which a too insistent Biblical literalism continues to bring confusion upon our Christian thought, diverting much of our energy into channels of futility. This doctrine is stressed by many "Bible Institutes" whose aims are thoroughly sincere. The religion of Jesus does not rest for its basic sanctions upon that kind of doctrine. Whether that doctrine be true or false is not an essential. Those who think it is are stressing the importance of very unimportant things. The real fundamentals of Christianity have to do with convictions and dedications far greater than that.

Believing the end of the world to be quite near these early Christians did not attempt to write comprehensively complete records. Most of them never dreamed the things they wrote were to be read thousands of years hence. The wonder is that so much early Christian literature has come down to us, and that what has survived is of so lyrically beautiful and inspired a quality. What has come down to us is the greatest literature in the world, made great by the Spirit of God aglow in the life of living men who long ago penned these ancient parchments.

The detailed story of the writing of the New Testament is a long and complicated affair. It is a thrillingly interesting study not merely from the viewpoint of the specialist in Biblical scholarship, but from the viewpoint of the average lay reader. The reader who cares to pursue the matter in a more comprehensive fashion is referred to other books on the subject. Very briefly put, the main details agreed upon by modern Christian scholarship are as follows:

The earliest documents are the letters of Paul. Jesus passed from the earth in the early 30's A. D. About twenty years later the first documents were written. Paul's letters comprise about one-fourth of what is now included in our New Testament. Paul's mind is large; his intelligence is disciplined; his heart is big; his whole tone and tenor is character-

ized by moral nobility, a great soul completely dedicated to a Great Cause. No one can come to know Paul's spacious personality and not grow taller. His letters were written to small groups of people with whom he had worked, dreamed and suffered. The letters dealt with each group's specific problems, practical or doctrinal.

When these letters were received these early Christian groups came together and listened to every word with rapt attention. As they listened to those great cadences and accents of which Paul was master their hearts were strangely stirred. When they finished reading these letters they would discuss their contents. They would frame a reply and dispatch a messenger to travel over land and sea to deliver it to Paul. They treasured these letters, putting them away very carefully, bringing them out again and again to read and reread.

It was so that our New Testament literature began to be formed. These early Christians had no Bible in the form we now have it. What literature was to comprise the Holy Bible of the Christian religion was not yet even thought of. Much of it had not yet been written. Hundreds of years were to come and go before the Sacred Scriptures of the Christian Faith were to be collected and men were to decide what writings to accept and what to reject. In those early days the best of what was later to be the sacred literature of our faith was just then beginning to be written and even then few or none of them realized that it was literature destined to be immortal.

There is so much we have been familiar with for centuries in our Christian religion which these early Christians knew nor cared nothing about. What these early Christians did have was an experience of the Living God. No greater experience is given to men in any age. In and through Christ they became aware of the Life of God living in their lives. With that Power they conquered. They overcame the world because "they outlived, out-thought and out-died their contemporaries."

They knew Great Religion's power. Many of them were very simple folk, yet they had the wisdom to know what many a modern man is too stupid to learn—that God can never be found at the end of an argument. They did not merely speculate about God. They *experienced* God in and through the revelation of Christ. All they knew was Christ, His Way, His Truth, His Life living in their lives. . . . And with that they conquered empires and changed the history of the world!

When the persecutions began, they met secretly in caves, catacombs and old abandoned quarries. These letters of Paul and of others they cherished and preserved. They made and sent copies to other like-minded groups of people. This was the way in which these letters first began to be circulated and revered. Nobody then realized a sacred literature was in process of being formed. Not all of Paul's letters were preserved. Some were lost. We are sure this is so because in the letters we have in our present New Testament Paul makes reference to other letters he has written which we do not now have in our possession.

All the books of the New Testament, with the exception of the four Gospels and the book called Acts, were letters or messages written by Paul, James, John, Peter and others, to some early Christian group or groups. The salutation is sometimes to an individual but a wider reading is always intended. Many other such messages and letters were written; a large number of these are lost. Many are still extant and yet are not in our New Testament. It is with the greatest restraint I force myself to leave this very meager account of the origin of these letters and messages. Not counting the book called Revelation, which will be treated later, there are twenty-one of these documents in our New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James (written by a

younger brother of Jesus), I and II Peter, I, II and III John and Jude.

There are stirring scenes in the full story of the origin of these little books. There are Power and Light in every one of them. They meet the test of greatness of expression; they lift and exalt the human spirit and bring a great sanity and beauty into life. But we cannot linger longer in our thought upon them. A full account of the origin and contents of these twenty-one little documents would require a book in itself and would throw our narrative quite out of balance.

We turn next to the origin of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The story of how these little sketches of the life and teachings of Jesus came to be written is of absorbing interest. If the story were ever dramatized in some magnificent presentation on the moving-picture screen it would be one of the most thrilling spectacles ever witnessed. Nothing more movingly dramatic has ever happened. If one will pick up the New Testament and take between one's thumb and forefinger the thin tissue pages of the four Gospels, one will be impressed with what a little batch of paper it is. And yet those pages contain all we know directly of the Jesus of history. The essentials of Christianity are found in those four Gospels. The life Jesus lived, the religious faith He Himself taught and died to defend—our first-hand and most authoritative knowledge of all that, is contained in those brief sketches. In them there is fire carried in paper, the living flame of the Great Personality! The influence the Jesus of history has exerted across nearly two thousand years of time belongs not to the realm of pious fiction but to the more substantial realm of historic fact. Reading those few and thin little pages we catch glimpses of the grandeur of the noblest Being who ever lived upon this earth! Looked at from any angle, secular, religious, those four Gospels are tremendously important little documents!

How did they come into being? Briefly, this is the story.

The earliest written record of the life and teachings of Jesus has been lost. Not long after Jesus passed away a group of His disciples, living in and near Jerusalem, wrote down many of His teachings. Anyone who knows the Oriental mind knows its remarkable accuracy and tenacity in remembering not only the thought and meaning but the exact words of notable sayings. In this old "lost Gospel" we have every reason to believe we have a very accurate record of many of Jesus' greatest teachings. Scholars believe it was very likely Matthew, the former tax-collector, who, if not the actual penman, was the guiding spirit in bringing together in written form these words of Jesus. This document is called the Logia (the Words) of Jesus. How scholars know there was such a document, and have been able, though it is lost, to piece most of it together, is a question space will not permit treating here.\*

The four Gospels copied heavily from this original source. The most careless reading of the four Gospels, especially the first three, discloses many passages that are exact duplicates; many others are identical regarding the general outline of what is told, with only slight minor variations. It is quite plain the Gospels we have, copied, sometimes word for word, many passages from some older document. In no other way would it be possible to account for the striking similarity found in so many parallel passages. Some older, more basic written record was consulted. In time, much or all that was in this "old Gospel" having been copied into these other Gospels, this old Gospel was no longer used. And so it was "lost." We no longer have it, and yet we do have it because what was vital in it has evidently been taken over into the Gospels we possess. The four Gospels were written by different men for different reasons, at different times and in widely separated places. All four were familiar with this older "lost" Gospel.

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\**The History and Literature of the New Testament*, by Henry Thatcher Fowler, gives an interesting account. The Macmillan Company, publishers.

No doubt they had it lying on the table before them when they wrote their own accounts.

The Gospel of Mark is the oldest of any in our possession. It might well be entitled, "The Memoirs of Peter." According to a very ancient tradition Peter went to Rome, somewhere between the years 50 and 60 A. D. He took with him as his helper and interpreter a young man named John Mark who could speak Latin and Greek. Peter spoke only Aramaic fluently. On the street corners or in the homes and other gathering places of those early Christians of Rome, young John Mark, standing beside Peter, would interpret his words, in Greek or Latin, that the people might more clearly understand. He heard and translated Peter's story of Jesus so often that it became indelibly impressed upon his mind. In the 60's A. D., during the reign of the Emperor Nero, the persecution of Christians began. Peter was killed, tradition says by crucifixion. After his death young John Mark wrote this Gospel which bears his name. He probably referred frequently to a copy of that old lost Gospel to assist the accuracy of his memory. The Gospel of Mark was probably written in Rome at a time when Christians were hiding in the catacombs. This ancient document takes us back very close to the actual facts of Jesus' life. It contains the witness of a man who knew the Jesus of history intimately. When young John Mark's pen went scratching across stiff parchment he did not know he was writing an immortal document.\*

The Gospel of Mark proclaims Jesus to have been the Son of God and develops many reasons to substantiate that claim, but there is no reference to the story of the Virgin Birth. Evidently neither Peter nor Mark had heard this story. Paul too was done to death during these same persecutions, probably in the summer of 64 A. D. Paul wrote one-fourth of our New

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\*See *The History and Literature of the New Testament*, by Fowler (Macmillan) pp. 293-98, etc. See also *The Story of the New Testament*, by Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, Chapter VIII.



Testament, and employed many proofs in confirmation of his conviction that Jesus was the Son of God, but Paul never once makes any reference whatsoever to the story of the Virgin Birth. Evidently Paul, like all those very early Christians, had never heard this story. Parenthetically it might be added that in all four of the Gospels where Jesus' own words and claims to be the Son of God are clearly set forth, never once does Jesus make any reference to His having been born of a Virgin. He never says, directly or indirectly, that in order for one to believe He was the Son of God one must believe He was born of a Virgin. Jesus too had evidently never heard this story. . . .

As we shall see later, the only Gospels (Matthew and Luke) which do refer to the Virgin Birth trace Jesus' genealogy back through Joseph and there are other references indicating Joseph was regarded as the human father of Jesus by the authors of Matthew and Luke. (Matthew 13:55; Luke 2:27, 41, 43; 4:22.) It is quite probable that the unpoetical literalism of our Occidental mind has misinterpreted the original meaning of this ancient and beautiful tale.

The story of the Virgin Birth is a subject upon which there is strange confusion which does serious injury to the true cause of Christ. There are those who have been alienated from the Christian Church on account of the insistence that this lovely legend must be taken as literal historic fact. The Church's dogmatic assertion that it must be literally believed so confuses the thinking of many people that they lose sight of the true Divine Greatness of Christ. This subject needs to be handled with reverence and with candor. We deal here with a very delicate question, but deal with it we must if our Christian faith is to be emancipated from literalistic beliefs which do it a very grave injustice.

Jesus was born of a human mother. No Protestant Christian will question that. In that sense He came into our world according to the way of all flesh. The processes of human

gestation, embryology and birth are well known. If those who are confused over this point will but think of it a bit, they will see that in order to be perfectly logical and consistent with their major premise, namely, that they cannot believe Jesus was the Son of God unless He was born in a way entirely different from the way in which all human beings are born, they will see that Jesus' being born of the human being Mary destroys their logic quite as much as does the probability that Joseph was His physical, earthly father. For their position to be thoroughly logical, Jesus should never have been born at all in any way even remotely connected with processes of human gestation and birth. He should have come from out of the clouds a full-grown human being, to have been, in their sense, in deed and in truth the Son of God. He should never have been tainted or made "earthly" in any way by being born in any manner even remotely connected with the physical processes of human birth.

The full humanity of Jesus is of the utmost importance to our cardinal Christian convictions. The doctrine of the incarnation is basic in our faith. That doctrine commits us without equivocation to the belief that the life of God lived in a supremely significant manner in the life of a real historic human Being. If our conception of Jesus' full humanity is weakened the tremendously appealing significance of the Divine Incarnation is lessened. The utterly unique divinity of Jesus was revealed in His spiritual qualities which cannot rest for their ultimate sanction or verification upon an abnormal physiological occurrence. Many of us, absolutely convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, do not find belief in a Virgin Birth is in any way pertinent or helpful in the establishment of that conviction.

The record of the most authoritative sources of information about Jesus is very impressive on this point. Peter, Paul, John, Jesus Himself, Mark and many of the other earliest Christians evidently never had heard the story of the Virgin

Birth. Or if they had heard it they evidently thought it of no importance because they never once referred to it in any way. If belief in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is essential in order for one to believe Jesus was the Son of God—it seems strange Jesus never said so, nor Paul, nor Peter, nor Mark, nor John, nor many others.

There are many scholarly books which have been written in defense of literal belief in the Virgin Birth. One of the ablest is *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, by Professor James Orr of the United Free Church College of Glasgow, Scotland. This book was written over twenty-five years ago. It is a splendid presentation, clear, scholarly, but, in my humble judgment, is an attempt to pour new wine into old bottles. It is an attempt to pour our modern scientific thought-forms and concepts into the old bottles of pre-scientific ways of thinking. Jesus once said it was impossible to put new wine into old bottles. (Matt. 9:17 and Mark 2:22.) There is no modern Christian scholar whose scholarship is generally accepted who is today seriously contending for a literal acceptance of the story of the Virgin Birth of our Lord, whom we all believe was the Son of Man and the Son of God.

The facts are, it would seem, this story was originated and gained a general currency very shortly after Jesus, John, Paul, Peter, Mark and many of the others had passed away. Christian devotion has attempted in many ways to give utterance to its reverence of Jesus. In the most beautiful art, music, painting, poetry, Christianity across the ages has attempted to express its adoration of our Lord. No matter how sublimely beautiful these expressions are, the devoted Christian always feels never that they say too much, but, at best, they all say too little. Jesus Himself was infinitely greater than any expression of devotion or any attempt at defining or accounting for or explaining His Divine Personality, ever written, painted, sung, chiseled or carved by Christian adoration. The historic fact of Jesus transcends the best and most beautiful of all our

attempts to adore, to explain or account for that fact. The story of the Virgin Birth was a sublimely beautiful attempt to explain the mystery of Jesus' Divine Personality in terms perfectly consistent with that far off age's pre-scientific ways of thinking. It is a story we modern Christians still adore and in whose tremendously suggestive and significant beauty we devoutly believe. It is part of a general legendary account which centers around the birth of Christ. The visit of the Magi and the songs of the angels are parts of this same general legendary lore.

One Christmas Eve near midnight I stood in the shepherd's field at Bethlehem. Nowhere in the world is the sky at night so beautiful. It would have required a very heavy-footed mentality, a dumb ox-like mind, to have failed to "see" under the mystic beauty of that night "the angelic hosts" and to have failed to "hear" their song—"and on earth peace, good will toward men. . . ." I would bitterly resent it if some radical literal-minded Biblical scholar should ever take these lovely legends out of our New Testament. I want these beautiful things to remain always in our Gospels. I teach their beauty to my children and I hope they will so teach their children. To destroy these stories would be like shattering the loveliest vase ever made, tearing to pieces the most exquisitely wrought poem, or tapestry, or painting ever created. These stories centering around the birth of Christ are marvelously done religious art, not statements of literal fact. These stories were attempts on the part of Christians of a far-off day to account for the Grandeur of the Divine Personality, in ways with which their pre-scientific ways of thinking were most familiar. What they wrote is true in its expression of Eternal Beauty which grows not old and our world must never permit to pass away.

All ancient literature is filled with stories of virgin births. Alexander the Great and a host of others all had stories of a miraculous virgin birth circulated about them and literally

believed. But to say these other stories of virgin births are exactly like that connected with Jesus, is to indicate one has never really read them. To say all these stories belong in the same category is like comparing the greatest work of a Leonardo da Vinci with the crudest daubing of the most amateur painter. Both are paintings, it is true, but there is a difference in paintings. The stories of all virgin births and of the Virgin Birth of Jesus are all legends. But there is a great difference in legends. The legend of the Virgin Birth of Jesus is chaste, restrained and ennobling in its beauty.

In our Christian homes when Christmas-time comes we open our New Testament to these old and lovely legends of the Star of Bethlehem, the Song of the Angels and the visit of the Magi, and we read these stories to our children. We sing the songs which Christian tradition has woven around the Christmas season. Whoever has looked intently into a child's face and listened to a child's voice singing these old songs at Christmas-time has come to know that God is very near and the angels are never very far away. In such moments one catches a fleeting insight into something of the meaning of Jesus' simple, profound words, "except ye become as a little child ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

If we Christians were more candid in teaching our children the truth about these beautiful old Bible stories, how much better prepared they would be when the time comes for them to go off to some college or university where they are bound to be confronted with modern scientific thought. Many of the children of our Christian homes lose their faith during their college and university years because we have not been candid either with ourselves or with them. I never hear of these young people, reared in our Christian homes, whose religious faith has been taken from them in some modern college or university that I do not wonder what kind of faith it was they were taught, before going off to college, which it was so easy for them to lose. There is a Christian faith, grounded

and centered in Christ, we can give to our children which no modern science nor philosophy can even touch nor scar, much less destroy.

The tendency of most Protestant churches is one of broad-mindedness on the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. With us it is not considered an essential dogma. My own denomination does not require subscription to it on the part of her laity and in practice she has been very tolerant on this point with her clergy. Though there are many of us who cannot accept this story as a statement of literal historic fact, yet there is no disposition on our part to be dogmatic about our position. If there are those in our churches who derive great meaning and comfort from a literal belief of this story we insist they have every right to such a belief though honesty requires many of us to say we take a different view which in no way impairs our unequivocal faith in the supremely unique Divine Sonship of our Lord Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church did not declare the doctrine of the Virgin Birth a dogma of the Church until 1854. With Rome Mary holds a unique place in the Godhead and is given such titles as, "The Queen of Heaven," "Mother of God," and prayers are addressed to her. Our Protestant Fathers abandoned Maryolatry at the time of the reformation.

We have apparently been led far afield by this discussion of the story of the Virgin Birth, but sooner or later it had to be dealt with. To go back and gather up our thread—we have told the story of how the Gospel of Mark came to be written. We have called attention to the fact that in that earliest Gospel in our possession—the contents of which were poured out of the memory of Peter himself, who knew Jesus intimately—nothing is said about the Virgin Birth. The Gospel of Mark was addressed primarily not to Jews of Palestine but to Roman Jews and Gentiles. Much of the background of old Jewish doctrine is therefore not to be found in it. It is simple, direct, filled with the "good news" (Gospel) that the long looked for

Messiah had come, not a Messiah of physical power but a suffering Messiah of love and of spiritual power. Jesus' clash with the most influential men of His day, issuing in His arrest, trial and crucifixion, is vividly portrayed, as is His appearance after death to Mary Magdalene and to others. At the close of the account the narrative, as we have it, breaks off suddenly. The original ending of the Gospel of Mark is lost. The ending we now have was evidently added at a later date to make up for this deficiency. Mark's Gospel was written probably somewhere between 65 and 70 A. D. in the "eternal city" of Rome. Of course, at first only a few saw it or even knew of its existence. Then later on copies were made of it and slowly it became more widely known.

The origin of the Gospel of Matthew is a story of absorbing interest. In the year 70 A. D. the Roman army of Titus came crashing through Palestine visiting a terrible discipline upon it. Jerusalem was destroyed amid a horrible massacre. Not one stone was left standing upon another. Fifteen thousand Jews were chained and transported as slaves to the city of Rome. They were put to building a magnificent structure where Nero's Golden House once stood. The structure they built is still standing. It is called the Colosseum. Under the hiss and sting of the slave-driver's lash, it was reared to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem. Curiously enough, in this vast Roman arena, for two hundred and fifty years Christians were tortured to death during the Empire's repeated persecution of the followers of the Nazarene. These Jewish slaves also built the triumphal arch of Titus, upon which one may see to this day, in bas-relief, Roman soldiers carrying from the Temple in Jerusalem the Seven Branch Candlestick and other sacred treasures. It was a cruel business, those Jewish slaves having to build memorials of such an event.

The destruction of Jerusalem was brought about through the repeated revolutionary uprisings of the Zealots. It was a ruthless punitive expedition of Roman arms which Jesus

warned the Jews was bound to come upon them if they did not cease their rebellious tactics.\* Following this catastrophe the Jews were scattered over that ancient world like leaves before the wind. The collapse of their nation left them dazed, bewildered! They wondered why this terrible thing had come upon them? The Gospel of Matthew was written as an answer to that question. It was written, somewhere in Palestine between the years 70 and 90 A. D., by an author whose name is not known. It was addressed primarily to Palestinian Jews. They had always thought of a conquering Messiah who would lead a victorious nation. They found it difficult to understand a Messiah who had gone down in defeat upon a Cross. The author was acquainted with Mark's Gospel which had in some way found its way from Rome into his hands. Nearly four-fifths of Matthew (fifty-three and one-half out of sixty-eight pages) is composed of material compiled from Mark and from that older "lost" Gospel which had been written forty or fifty years earlier.

The remaining one-fifth is composed of fresh material not found in Mark or in any other extant document. It was written for a different purpose and to a different group. It gives an account of the Virgin Birth to which previous reference has been made. This beautiful story is preceded by a long genealogy to prove that Jesus was a descendant of King David, but strangely enough the line of descent is traced through Joseph instead of through Mary. The Virgin Birth, the slaughter of the innocents, and the flight into Egypt are all regarded as necessary fulfillments of the words of ancient prophets concerning the coming of the Jewish Messiah. Quite different from the older Gospel of Mark, the phrase is repeated over and over again, that such and such "came to pass," "in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled," ancient Scripture foretelling the coming of a Messiah.

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\*Jesus' connection with these revolutionary uprisings will be treated in a later chapter.



All through the book the author is elaborating his proof that the destruction of Jerusalem had come upon the Jew because he had rejected the Messiah. And so the main emphasis of the book is entirely different from that of the Gospel of Mark which was written from an altogether different point of view and with a quite different purpose in mind. Matthew is intensely interesting in the insight it gives into the kind of thinking which was going on in the minds of those early Palestinian Christian Jews toward the close of the first century A. D.

After making due allowance for passing and permanent elements this ancient document stands convincingly before us in its impressive portrayal of the Jesus of history. A solid historical reality is seen behind and through the medium of its words. Ernest Renan, who characterized Luke "as the most beautiful book in the world," styled Matthew as "the most important book in the world." "Certainly it became the most widely read book in the world. Today it is safe to say that more people have read this Gospel than any other book in the world's literatures, ancient or modern." Matthew gives us many facts concerning the life of Jesus, many of His greatest teachings not to be found in any of the other Gospels. This book, like all the others, was, of course, known at first to only a limited few. Then copies were made of it and it began to be slowly circulated.

In turning next to the story of the origin of the Gospel of Luke we pass into a yet different atmosphere. The Gospel of Luke is volume one, as it were, of a two-volume work, which set out first, to explain the facts concerning the life and teachings of Jesus, and, second, to give an account of how the religion of Jesus came to separate itself from peculiarly Jewish beliefs and became a religion which spread far beyond the bounds of Jewish Palestine making its appeal to the larger Roman and Greek Gentile world. It was fitting and proper that such an account should be written not by a Jew explaining

these things to Gentiles, but by a Gentile, who had himself been converted to Christianity.

There are conflicting traditions regarding Luke and his native place of residence. One of the most widely current of the early traditions claims that Luke was a Gentile physician who had been reared in an important cosmopolitan center outside of Palestine. He may have grown up and received his education in the flourishing city of Alexandria on the north coast of Africa. When he wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, he was probably an old man, living in some Greek city on the shores of the Ægean Sea. He had witnessed during his own lifetime the spread of Christianity far beyond the boundaries of Palestine. He had taken an active part in this glad and great enterprise. His mind was stored with vivid memories. Shortly after his conversion he had lived for a time in Jerusalem and had met men and women who had known Jesus. From their lips he heard many stories connected with the Master's life. He was probably a man—physician, scientist, scholar that he was—who had the habit of writing things down which he considered important. He knew Paul intimately and traveled extensively with him. He stood with Paul before mobs, magistrates, kings; in storms and shipwrecks at sea. He and the man from Tarsus sang when chained together in the gloom of jails whose walls dripped with damp. In writing the book of Acts Luke could well have said of much of it "all of this I saw and some of this I was." Luke was admirably fitted for the task of writing an account of the life and teachings of Jesus and the spread of Christianity across the Gentile Empire of Rome.

When Luke wrote there was no authoritatively declared official Gospel. The Gospels of whose origin we have already told, Mark and Matthew, were not widely known. Christian preachers were traveling over that ancient world telling the story of Jesus largely from memory of what others had told them. Many had undertaken to write their own accounts based

largely upon oral traditions. And so in time there were many stories circulated orally about Jesus and there were many gospels written by many different persons. We have copies of some of these other gospels which were written around this time. When our New Testament collection was finally decided upon, these other gospels were not included. The reasons for this omission will be easily understood by any one who will take the trouble to secure copies of them and read them. Most of these other gospels are filled with bizarre legends about Mary and about Jesus' boyhood, and much other material which shows on the face of it that they are full of impossible miracle tales and were written with little apparent care for facts. They are inferior in every way to the Gospels which are in our New Testament. They belong in an altogether different category.

It was very confusing to those early Christians to hear so many conflicting stories and to read so many different accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. A certain Greek Gentile Christian, whose name was Theophilus, was disturbed over this prevailing contradiction and confusion. What were Christian people to believe and what were they not to believe concerning Jesus? There were so many different teachers telling so many different things. There were so many different "gospels" telling so many different stories. It was so easy for impossible myths and legends to grow. Somebody who had enjoyed a close contact with the people who knew Jesus when He lived upon the earth, and who knew the facts as to how Christianity spread from out of Jewish Palestine across the pagan Gentile Roman world, ought to put an end to all this contradiction and confusion by writing out the complete story himself. In order that this problem might be solved, Luke, the physician, writing to his Greek Gentile friend Theophilus, somewhere around the close of the first century, began putting his scattered notes and his rich store of memory into the more permanent and orderly form of writing. And so there came

into being the Gospel According to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

The Gospel According to Luke opens thus: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the Word, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. There was in the days of Herod, the King of Judæa. . . ."

The Acts of the Apostles starts off thus: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. . . ." And then Luke swings into the writing of the book of Acts which tells the story of the spread of Christianity from the little province of Palestine clear across the Empire of Rome. If we did not have the book of Acts we would not know how this happened. Acts is a fascinatingly interesting book, with its "bewildering variety of riots, arrests, trials, councils, voyages, shipwrecks, imprisonments and escapes. These are set in the most varied scenes: temples, market-places, deserts, islands, synagogues, the courts of kings and governors, the streets of those splendid flourishing cities of the Greco-Roman world, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Rome."\* And over it all is the writer's conviction that the Power of the Spirit of God was behind the events he sought to narrate. When Luke wrote this book, Christianity was little thought of by Roman or Greek historians. But this good Greek physician was then writing the beginnings of what we now call Church History, which was destined to engage the attention of all future historians who essayed to tell the story of the rise of Western civilization. If someone with the proper touch and

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talent would take the book of Acts, just as it is, and write a scenario of it and produce it upon the moving picture screen, it would be one of the greatest dramatic spectacles ever portrayed. It is full of stirring action. When one lays the book down one instinctively pays the highest possible compliment to it by wishing its author had written more!

Luke-Acts are two main divisions of one single and connected account. In the Gospel of Luke the author drew, as did the writer of Matthew, from that old "lost Gospel" and also from Mark. Luke tells the story, as does Matthew, of the Virgin Birth, but adds many details apparently unknown to the author of Matthew. In Luke the same curious inconsistency appears as in Matthew; Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and yet in tracing Jesus' genealogy the line of descent is given back through Joseph to David, to Abraham, to "Adam which was the son of God" (Luke 3:38). It is not beyond the range of probability that Luke never wrote this story of the Virgin Birth, but that this exquisitely wrought legend was later added by the devoted hand of someone who had the soul of an artist and wished in this beautifully artistic way to express the early Church's adoration of the Divine Greatness of Jesus. In Luke we find many of Jesus' parables, the story of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Coin, the Good Samaritan, the Pharisee and Publican at prayer, and much else which is not to be found in either Mark or Matthew. Luke evidently had access to some original source material unknown, certainly unused, by either the author of Mark or Matthew.

We are indebted to Luke for the preservation of some of those primitive Christian songs that have become great hymns of the Church, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*, the words and inspiration of which are found in the first two chapters of Luke. We are more indebted to Luke than to any of the other Gospels for our Christian conception of God as our Father; for our conception of the universal humanity of Jesus and our knowledge of what He taught con-

cerning humane, Christ-like dealings with our fellow men. Luke holds vividly before us throughout his Gospel the portrait of the Divine Christ. Renan's tribute, "the most beautifully written book in the world," is not too great a literary compliment to bestow upon Luke. And yet this little book was written—like the other Gospels—not in the classical diction of its day but in the simple language of the people. Perhaps that is one reason why Luke is so beautifully done.

There are four Gospels in our New Testament. We have told the story of the origin of three: Mark, Matthew and Luke. And in telling the story of the origin of Luke we have told of the origin of Acts. These three Gospels, though very different in many ways, have much in common. Their similarity is more striking than their dissimilarity. The fourth Gospel stands by itself. The Gospel of John is quite different from the other three. There was a reason.

Christianity at first was a Jewish movement addressing itself almost entirely to Jewish minds to whom Jewish doctrines and religious phraseology were familiar. Under the impetus of Paul Christianity began making converts among the Gentiles. There were thus both Greeks and Jews in the early Christian Church. In time, however, the Jewish element in Christianity entirely disappeared and the Church was wholly Greek Gentile. But practically all the Gospels then extant and most of the letters and other written documents dealing with the Christian faith, were written from a Jewish background employing peculiarly Jewish concepts. It was difficult for the Greek Gentile mind to grasp the Jewish concept of a Messiah whose coming had been foretold by ancient Jewish prophets, and who was destined to come again out of the clouds of heaven in fulfillment of the apocalyptic hope long identified in Jewish thinking with their Jewish Messiah.

By the end of the first century it had become apparent that the future of Christianity belonged not to the Jewish world but to the Greek Gentile world. But still the Church was very

largely addressing this Greek Gentile mind in Jewish religious terminology. Could not the Christian Church free itself of the restrictions placed upon its thinking by this use of a peculiarly Jewish religious vocabulary? Was there a less circumscribed thought-form and religious language in which the meaning and significance of Jesus could be told in more universal terms? This was a very pressing problem. It is a pressing problem in every age of Christian history, to present and interpret Christ in thought-forms and terminology best understood by that age.

To meet this problem, early in the second century of our Christian era, the Gospel of John was written. It is a presentation of Jesus in terms of Greek thought addressed not to Jewish but to Greek Gentile minds. Jesus is presented not as the Jewish Messiah but as the eternal Logos (Word) of Greek Stoic philosophy. The Greek mind was not moved by a presentation of the Jewish Messiah, but it was mightily moved by the presentation of Jesus as the divine Logos of Greek philosophic thought, the divine Word of God made focal and visible, concrete and understandable in a living Personality. If the reader will turn to the Gospel of John he will discover at once he is moving not in the world of Jewish ideology but in the very different world of Greek thought. The Gospel of John begins: "In the beginning was the Word (Greek Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth." And so the Gospel of John continues from beginning to end holding that dominant thought before the reader's mind—Jesus the incarnation and revelation of the life and character of the Eternal God in the life and character of a living historic Personality.

The writer of John does not seek to refute the conception of Jesus portrayed in the other Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. He respects and believes in the presentation set forth in these other Gospels. He does not seek to supersede them but merely to supplement them. He still thinks of Jesus as the

Messiah and he still holds the Jewish Scriptures in high reverence. The Greek concept of the revealing Word was not unknown to Jewish scholars. Indeed, some years before this Gospel was written, the Jewish scholar Philo, of Alexandria, had identified the Greek Logos with the revealing Word of Jehovah found in the Jewish Sacred Scriptures (our Old Testament).

At first there was wide-spread criticism of the Gospel of John. It was too novel and too unlike the phraseology and concepts of the older and more familiar Gospels, Mark and Matthew and Luke. Early Christians resented having this new Gospel with its strange new terminology read alongside the older and more familiar Gospels. But in time it won its way into the thought, affections and convictions of the Christian Church. It interprets the doctrine of the incarnation, Jesus, the Son of God, in terms more congenial and intelligible to us than are to be found in any of the other Gospels. The unique divinity of Jesus stands vividly before our modern mind, in the Gospel of John. This Gospel says nothing about the Virgin Birth.

The writer of John also presents a different conception of the Second Coming of Christ. In the earlier Christian writings Jesus' miraculous Second Coming was confidently expected. This hope which was very strong in the early days of Christianity finally began to decline as the years passed and Jesus did not come again. The writer of the Gospel of John takes this old concept and gives it a very sane and satisfying interpretation. In his thought Jesus has already come again as His Spirit has come into the hearts of living men. And so in this very rational way, under his Greek Gentile touch, he transforms the old Jewish out-of-the-clouds apocalyptic expectation into a rational spiritual experience. Christ will keep on and on coming again as the Spirit of the Holy God revealed in Christ continues across the ages to enter the Christian consciousness of men, guiding them into ever larger truth as the centuries



wing their patient flight across our earth. The Gospel of John is timeless and eternal in its meaning. If our whole Bible were lost and only this Gospel should remain we would still have in our possession one of the greatest legacies of our rich Christian heritage.

We do not know who wrote the Gospel of John. Much of its material probably came in some way from John, "the beloved disciple" of Jesus, but it is highly improbable that that John wrote this Gospel in the form in which we now have it. One of the foremost New Testament scholars of our day writes:

"It is very probable that it was written by that Elder of Ephesus who perhaps after the publication of this Gospel wrote the three letters that bear the name of John.

"The Gospel of John was wholly successful in what it undertook. . . . Its great ideas of revelation, life, love, truth and freedom, its doctrine of the spirit as ever guiding the Christian consciousness into larger vision and achievement, and its insistence upon Jesus as the supreme revelation of God and the source of spiritual life, have given it unique and permanent religious worth."\*

Before bringing to a close this brief sketch of the origin of the New Testament, a bit of space should be given to the last book in the Bible. The book called Revelation is misunderstood by many Christian people. Written as it is in the most highly figurative, symbolic style, it has been a great favorite for that type of mind which likes to make of Christianity a movement of weird clairvoyance absorbed in prophecies of future world events miraculously foretold. A type of mind which delights in mystification in the name of religion, finds Revelation quite to its liking. Granted the doctrine of literal infallibility, it is exactly the kind of document in which one can read into it—in all sincerity—almost anything one wishes. An

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imposing array of proof texts can be assembled to substantiate the conviction that John long ago predicted the German Kaiser would bring war upon the earth in 1914 A. D., or that such and such a Pope was or is the "Anti-Christ" spoken of in Revelation, or that the "world is coming to an end" in the year 1954, and so on ad infinitum. This is exactly the sort of thing which many sincere but misguided Christian people have actually done with this book and some of them are still doing with it. The book is a favorite for those who delight in thinking of the supernatural impending end of the world and literal material manifestation of the "Second Coming of Christ." If religious sanity is to prevail in our Protestant Christianity, here is a book the rank and file of our people ought to understand in a more common-sense rational manner.

It was a very dangerous thing to be a Christian in the first century. Christianity started off with no conflict with the Roman Government. Paul writes in his letters that Christians should obey the civil authority, that it is an authority ordained of God. Luke gives a very extenuating picture of Pontius Pilate. There was no feeling at first on the part of any of those early Christians that the Roman Government would ever oppress and persecute them. Rome was very tolerant of religious beliefs held in great variety. Rome, like modern Great Britain, had a far-flung empire made up of many different peoples who espoused many different religions, and, like modern Great Britain, Rome avoided stirring up trouble among her subjects by intolerance along religious lines. There was, however, one religious doctrine which, not always, but from time to time, Rome insisted upon all her subjects believing and practicing. That was the doctrine of the divinity of the Roman Emperor, the doctrine that the Emperor was a god. Some Emperors treated this matter lightly, never pushed it, never took it seriously. Others took it very seriously, like the idea of having millions of people bow in worship of them as gods. The widely varying people of the far-flung Empire of Rome rarely re-

sented this. They were accustomed to worshiping many gods, had no objection to adding one more to the list.

There were two exceptions, the Jews and the Christians. We are not here concerned with the conflict between orthodox Jews and their Roman overlords. We are concerned only with the conflict between Roman civil government and the religious beliefs of the early Christians. These Christians refused absolutely to worship any Roman Emperor as a god. They had but One God and Him only would they worship, the God who was revealed in Christ. It must be remembered that these Christians were rapidly increasing in numbers throughout the Empire. They were not confined to any one area. They were everywhere and were rapidly growing in numbers and influence.

From the viewpoint of Rome of that day, for a Roman subject to refuse to worship the Emperor as one of the gods, was like a man today refusing to salute the flag. It was proof within itself, so Rome thought, that the man was a dangerous political revolutionist. He was an enemy of the state, a fomenter of insurrection. He must be dealt with and forced to worship the Emperor as a god as proof that the man was "loyal to the government," was "one hundred per cent patriotic." If the stubborn rascal still refused, then crush him, exterminate him and his kind! And so the persecution of Christians began, not really as religious persecutions but as patriotic persecutions. Patriotism has, of course, always been one of the fiercest, most highly intolerant and competitive religions of the earth.

In addition to Roman persecution of Christians for "patriotic" reasons, in behalf of the solidarity and safety of the state, a further fact should be taken into account. As time went on the great gulf between pagan and Christian ideals of life grew wider and deeper and the hatred of Christians became more intense. It is human nature to hate those whose ideals of life are not in conformity with our own, especially if the difference

be irreconcilable as was the case between pagan and Christian ideals. And so Rome proceeded with increasing fierceness to hunt, hurt, beat, butcher, catch and kill those who refused to conform to her pagan standards. The purity, devotion and heroism of the early Christian martyrs forms one of the most moving chapters in the story of man upon the earth! The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. It is a strange mysterious thing, but a fact undeniable, that out of those centuries of blood and brutality bravely resisted, not by force but by faith, hope and love, there did emerge and grow upon the earth the most enduring and uplifting force known in human history.

In trying to understand the book Revelation one must have in the background of one's mind scenes of brutal terror, mingled horror and heroism. Little clouds of vapor steaming from the sawdust of the arena wet with human blood; the roar of wild beasts clawing at their cages; the damp dungeons in which the Christian martyrs were huddled; men, old and gray, with saintly faces; men young and strong; women of all ages, upon whose features the light of a strange beauty shone; little children with wondering, frightened eyes; the Emperor in all his pomp of power; the Vestal Virgins; the sea of thousands of faces, the Roman mob crowding the huge arena, tier upon tier, waiting for the bloody spectacle to begin. . . . These things were the background of that strange book called Revelation. . . .

The book was written in secret code, signs, symbols, allegory, which only the initiated could understand. It was written by John, an exile, a prisoner on the island of Patmos. It was written to Christians who were suffering under Roman persecution. Writing his book in the highly figurative language of Jewish apocalyptic literature, John tells these Christians not to compromise by one iota in their struggle with Rome, and in the end Christianity will win and Rome will perish, because God is with them and against Rome! A government spy, hunting for Christian victims whose flesh could be torn by the lions

of the arena, coming upon this document, could make nothing out of it, but the initiated could. That was why this book was written in such highly symbolic language. It served a great end in its day and can still serve a great end in our day. It is fact and not theory that in spite of nearly three hundred years of brutal persecution, Christianity triumphed and the Roman Empire perished! This book helped thousands of Christian martyrs to meet life with courage and death with heroism in their hearts. No modern Christian can read Revelation and not be profoundly moved—especially so if he has sat at night, underneath a full Italian moon, in the impressive silence of the ruins of the Colosseum in Rome. . . .

The true greatness of this book belongs not to one age but to every age. It never has been easy for thoughtful men to believe the universe is on the side of Goodness. There are so many harsh and brutal facts which seem to run the other way. It is easy to be captivated in any age by the delusion which claims that religious faith is but an empty dream and man fights a lone fight amid a Vast Indifference. Religious faith seems so often a thing so frail, woven of the futile threads of the stuff of dreams. It seems so unsubstantial a thing to pit against the solid mass of stone walls and brute force employed on a scale of empire. Is it possible that goodness is inherent within a vast and nameless Something that is durable above the daily dust of life and time's cruel oblivion? Revelation thunders in tones of positive conviction that God and Goodness are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all things; that no forces of harsh hatreds and bloody brutality can ever completely overcome the Good. It was so John wrote to those early Christians in that odd ancient book called Revelation. These were things they needed desperately to hear. These are things we still need to hear.

John's prophecy in Revelation has come true. Rome has long since passed away and so has every other historical movement since then whose might has been based upon brute force. The

colossal insanity and ghastly horror of the World War ought to convince all sane men everywhere that ruthless violence has no enduring power in it, and all things earthly that are built upon it are destined in time to be destroyed. If we understand Revelation's true mission and message we see its greatness, but to treat its symbolism in any literal manner hopelessly entangles us in clairvoyant absurdities which do gross injustice to the book itself and our thought is clouded in endless confusion.

#### HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON WAS FORMED

It would require a large book to tell the full story of how and why the books of the New Testament were originally brought together and have come down to us of today. The facts briefly stated follow. Jesus passed from the earth in the early 30's A. D. By the end of the century most of the literature we have in the New Testament had been written, in widely different places, by many different men, from many different viewpoints and for many different purposes. This early Christian literature, along with much else, some of which has survived to the present day and some of which has not, was being slowly circulated among the Christians of those early centuries. All the books of the New Testament were in existence and yet the New Testament itself did not exist. Several centuries passed before the New Testament, as we now know it, had been assembled and Christian usage had attached to it an unusual veneration. Printing presses were unknown in those days. Books were few. What writings there were had to be laboriously copied by hand on rolls of parchment.

For a long time the Christian message and tradition was carried on by word of mouth supplemented by reference to such early writings as various groups had in their possession. Of these early writings some stood out above others in estimations of worth and authoritative validity in the minds of

growing numbers of people. The writings which appealed most strongly to them they preserved with care. They became careless toward documents which did not appeal to them. The process through which all literature passes, selection and survival of the fittest, played its inevitable part in the selection and preservation of that portion of these ancient writings which has come down to us.

Jesus was the Great Authority for these early Christians, and so as time passed and oral tradition became more and more vague and contradictory they naturally began to attach greater importance to the earliest writings they had, telling of Jesus' life and teachings; interpretations of the Master's mission and message written by men, who they believed were most endowed with Christ's Spirit. And so the gradual collection of the New Testament books began.

As the number of adherents of early Christianity increased, with their churches or groups widely scattered over a vast territory and held together by no binding centralized authority, various Christian sects sprang up and strangely contradictory and heretical teachings were being taught. To correct such errors the appeal was made more and more to the earliest Christian writings. In this way they became vested with authority.

The earliest collection of Christian writings of which we have any definite knowledge was made by an erratic and prosperous ship owner of Asia Minor whose name was Marcion. He felt that the God of the Old Testament could not possibly be the same God portrayed in the teachings of Jesus and in the letters of Paul. He wanted Christians to abandon further use or veneration of the Old Testament. He collected such early Christian writings as he could lay his hands upon and which most appealed to him as best expressing Jesus' lofty conception of God. Marcion's proposal to abandon belief in the God of the Old Testament is reminiscent of similar proposals made quite recently in some areas of modern Germany. Marcion's New Testament consisted only of the Gospel of Luke and ten

of the letters of Paul. How many similar though varying collections were made by many others in widely separated areas, we do not know. But we do know it was by such processes of selectivity that the New Testament gradually came into being.

Some books now almost completely forgotten were included in some of the earliest New Testament collections of which we have any knowledge. The names of some of these books, found in very old Greek manuscripts, going back to collections made in the third and fourth centuries, are: The Letters of Clement of Rome, The Shepherd written by Hermas, and The Epistle of Barnabas. There was also a letter from the Roman Church to the church at Corinth and a sermon from the same source and to the same destination. Thus in the oldest extant copies we have of the "New Testament" we discover a New Testament quite different in some respects from the one which has come down to us.

There were other early writings which were never held in such high regard; for example, the various spurious gospels, of Mary, of the Infancy, of Nicodemus, of Thomas and of Peter; The Acts of Paul and Thecla, The Acts of Pilate, Epistles of the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Smyrneans, the correspondence of Paul and Seneca, the stories of Christ and Abgarus and the letters of Herod and Pilate. There is a great deal of early Christian literature which is not in our New Testament, which has survived, and most of it is available for the student of Biblical literature. It all throws light upon these ancient times. It ranges from serious and reverent writing down to purely imaginary tales.

The first mention we have of the list of New Testament books, exactly as we Protestants have them today, no more and no less, appears in a letter written by Athanasius of Alexandria three hundred and sixty-seven years after Jesus was born, three hundred and thirty-three or three hundred and thirty-four years after Jesus passed from the earth. But even long after this date there was disagreement as to what books should



be considered inspired and authoritative. What was to be included in the New Testament and what was not to be included was a matter that took hundreds of years to be decided upon and this question has never been unanimously decided by all adherents of the Christian faith. Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics and Protestants have different lists of books in their respective New Testaments. Calvin and Luther, as late as the sixteenth century, expressed their doubts concerning the fitness and place of some of the minor books in our New Testament, such as Revelation, James and Jude. We have record of some books that were admitted into the canon by a majority of only one vote in certain church councils. The copies we now have of our New Testament books are of comparatively recent date. No copies go back to very ancient times. The original documents perished over one thousand five hundred years ago.

The New Testament books were probably never circulated in one single volume until after the printing press was invented. Previous to this time there were manuscripts containing only the Gospels, others containing only Acts and the general epistles of James, Peter, John, Jude, and perhaps a fourth, containing Revelation. For many centuries the common people were largely ignorant of the exact contents of the New Testament. Finally its words were translated from the Greek and Latin, which only scholars could read, into the English, German and other modern languages of the people. It was not, indeed, until the coming of the Protestant Reformation that the New Testament was put into the hands of the people.

The influence of the New Testament has been immeasurably great in preserving for us the best of the earliest Christian writings. In this unique and divinely inspired collection of sacred literature the fundamental convictions of our faith are found. What the real heart of the Christian faith is we have not yet attempted to explore. And we shall not be ready to undertake that task until after we have considered the question which heads the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### HOW DEPENDABLE ARE THESE DOCUMENTS?

#### THE FOUR GOSPELS

AT THE heart of the New Testament there is a solid core of fact centering around an historic Personality. It is this fact which binds this sacred literature together and gives to it the only permanent significance it possesses. Christianity is Christ. His life and teachings are the Rock upon which our faith is founded. The problem of the dependability of New Testament literature may be simplified, therefore, by reducing our investigation to the dependability of the four Gospels. All that we know directly of the life and teachings of the historic Jesus is found in the pages of those four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The balance of the New Testament literature nowhere contradicts the essential truth which lies at the heart of the Gospels, but, on the contrary, sheds a helpful light upon it. If, therefore, we can arrive at the permanent core of truth which is at the heart of these Gospels, we shall have answered the question regarding the essential trustworthiness of this sacred collection of early Christian writings.

Much of this chapter has been anticipated in previous chapters. The reader who has followed these pages carefully up to this point will be neither surprised nor shocked by the statement that there are elements in the four Gospels we cannot accept as literal historic fact. We gain nothing by seeking to evade or gloss over that fact. It confronts us and we must look straight at it. This problem has been familiar to Christian scholars for generations. There is nothing new or startling about it. We write here of nothing novel but the attempt

is made to bring within a brief compass, for the benefit of the rank and file of our Protestant constituency, the results of reverent Christian scholarship in its work across many long and patient years in studying the four Gospels, clearing away the beautifully legendary elements which grew up around and about Jesus after He passed from the earth and recovering the actualities of the life and teachings of Him whom we still adore as the Son of Man and the Son of God!

If this very elementary book is to be of any abiding value it will lie largely in the fact that we have dared to have faith in the consecrated common sense of the masses of our Protestant people. We have dared to believe they may be taken into the full confidence of what all liberal Christian scholarship knows to be the truth, and that knowing the truth they will co-operate with their leaders, fundamentalists and liberal, to the end that we may re-state our basic faith in terms more intelligible to our age. Christian scholars have pursued their task involving the textual and historical criticism of the Gospels with this basic conviction—that no truth can overturn the Truth, and their efforts have been abundantly rewarded. They have not—as some misinformed and misguided people think—destroyed our rich Christian heritage of faith. On the contrary they have vindicated and sustained it.

We have already dealt with some of the beautifully legendary elements which are in the Gospels, such as the stories centering around the birth of Christ. We have also considered other elements which represent the passing ways of thinking of New Testament times—such as a literal belief in the Devil and demons; a literal expectation of an impending catastrophe in which the world would come to an end and Christ would return miraculously to the earth “putting all enemies under His feet” and establishing by power supernatural His reign of righteousness upon the earth. We cannot accept these statements in a literal way. They all represent passing and not permanent elements in the Gospels. They all

belong to modes of thinking intelligible to first-century thought but unintelligible to the modern mind if their literalism be unduly stressed. Since, however, these things have already been dealt with we need no longer dwell upon them.

A few pages devoted to the Gospel accounts of Jesus' miracles should be helpful. Stories of Christ's healing miracles need not disturb us. There are undoubtedly embellishments which have been added to the actual events, but the essential dependability of these stories of the healing of physical infirmities ought to be clearly recognized. A great deal of light has been thrown by modern science upon the curative effects of right thinking or "suggestion," dropped by a powerful and dominant personality into the fear-ridden mind of a person suffering from some bodily ailment. It has been positively demonstrated that fear may produce many functional bodily maladjustments, may so lower the whole physical tone and tenor of the body as to make it a fertile field for all kinds of imaginary and real diseases. The literature on this subject, unquestioned by any informed person, is so profuse and well known that it seems unnecessary to dwell on it. There are many things which can be cured by "faith." There is no magical hocus-pocus about it. Positive, fearless, affirmative thinking; a cheerful, buoyant, optimistic state of mind induced in a patient, can work wonders with many physical ailments, imaginary and otherwise.

Two cases, quite similar, reported shortly after the World War in the abundant literature which came out of the experiences of all nations with shell-shock, psychic trauma and soldier's hysteria, are interesting and enlightening in this regard. A certain American soldier went into the war with the dominant fear that he would lose his eyesight. He went over the top under a heavy barrage fire. A shell exploded near him, never so much as scratched him, but sent him hurtling into a shell-hole which was full of soft mud. He was knocked unconscious. His face was splattered with thick

mud which dried and caked a bit in the sun. When he came to, just as his awareness of things was dawning again in normal consciousness, fear-dominated, he tried to open his eyes. For a brief moment he could not open them because of the mud which was splattered across his eyes. That brief moment was sufficient for the terrible fear to go flashing through his mind, "I am blind. My God! Blind!" And he was blind. In the hospital in which he was treated they examined his eyes. Perfectly good eyes. Not a scratch. Nothing physical anywhere on his head or his body, to have brought on this blindness. His two eyes looked straight out at the doctor but the eyes did not see! The doctors would make as though they were about to strike his face, to see if he were bluffing, to see if his lids would not blink. Every test failed. The lad was blind. No doubt about it. He had paralyzed some nerve center in his brain. He had done this himself. Nothing outside of himself but something inside his mind—fear—had brought this darkness upon him. The problem of the doctors was to dig back into the full story of how all this had happened and to sow the right thoughts in the blind lad's mind. They pointed out to him how this whole thing had been subtly, devastatingly brought upon him by himself, and how, by the calling out of powers of faith within himself, the thing could be cured. This was done and his sight was restored. The blind was made to see.

The other war story to which reference is made is an almost exact duplicate. In this incident the lad came to and tried to lift an arm. He could not because some heavy object pinned it down. Just as he was coming to—those brief seconds were sufficient for the terrible thought to go flashing through his mind that his arm was paralyzed! And it was—paralyzed by his own "suggestion" of fear! Here again not a scratch was upon him but for many days in the hospital one of his arms hung limp and helpless at his side. Finally a psychiatrist dug the full story out of the lad and by the proper "suggestion"

the helpless arm was healed. There is nothing unusual about either of these cases. Modern psychiatry is fully acquainted with many such cures. All modern physicians now understand these things.

Millions of such cures have occurred in all ages; the miracle healings before ancient religious shrines and relics; what undoubtedly happens at St. Anne de Beaupre in Canada; Our Lady of Lourdes in France; in modern Christian Science; the healings a few years ago that were reported to have taken place at the grave of a certain priest in Malden, Massachusetts—all these things are well known and clearly recognized today. That we have curative powers within ourselves, which if properly aroused within us can release us from many functional bodily disturbances, is quite clear to modern science. This is a power inherent apparently within life, and, if we believe life is of God this vital curative capacity in no way rules His power out of the discovery or exercise of it.

This modern knowledge throws light upon Jesus' healing miracles. It in no way reduces the greatness of His unique and Divine Personality. It rather enhances our appreciation and understanding of Him. Nearly two thousand years ago He used and called attention to certain curative powers we all have within us, induced by ridding the mind of fear through buoyant, positive, affirmative faith, which it has taken mankind nearly two thousand years to rediscover and apply to practical uses. In this as in so much else Jesus was thousands of years ahead of His time. But His real Greatness is not to be found in what He did to men's bodies but in what His influence did and still does to men's characters.

Our greatest difficulty arises with some of the stories in the Gospels of Jesus' nature miracles. Jesus is said to have done marvelous things in manipulating and controlling natural phenomena: quieted a storm on the Sea of Galilee; changed water into wine; made it possible for Peter to walk upon the water; converted five loaves and two fishes into enough food

to feed thousands of people; miraculously took a coin out of a fish's mouth and several other such marvels. Can we believe such stories of nature miracles are records of literal historic facts? Did such things actually happen?

It is interesting to trace the history of Christian thinking in this connection. It should be remembered that all through the Middle Ages miracles were being performed all over Europe and no one thought there was anything unusual about it. Church history of the Middle Ages is full of the most incredible tales of miracles performed by saints, holy images and sacred relics at innumerable places of pious pilgrimage. Not miracles that happened two thousand years ago, but miracles that were happening then all over Europe, dominated the thought and belief of the medieval church. The coming of the Protestant Reformation put an end to belief in such contemporary miracles.

In the Roman Catholic Church miracles performed by saints, holy relics and sacred images are still devoutly believed. In this, as in many other respects, Roman Catholicism has been more consistent than Protestantism, and, of course, Rome has a brilliant intellectual defense for all such beliefs. Protestantism, on the other hand, has taken the position that it is proper to believe in nature miracles that happened several thousand years ago but it is not quite proper to believe in such miracles as are said to have happened since then. Belief in nature miracles happening now is not encouraged but is frowned down upon by practically all Protestant groups.

The Protestant mind was a twin of the modern scientific mind. Both were born in the same era of history and both, from their inception, were characterized by a free and fearless inquiry into truth under the guidance of intellectual processes of practical observation and wholesome common sense. The Protestant mind has always felt an instinctive repugnance for nature miracles, lest the high morality and spirituality of emancipating religious faith be delivered into the hands of belief in

magic and credulous superstition. There is a curious inconsistency in Protestantism's position on nature miracles in professing a literal belief in such things having happened several thousand years ago and yet denying a literal belief in such happenings now. The effect of this has been to divide our conception of God's governance of the world into historical compartments. It means that we have been called upon to believe that God, who is "the same yesterday, today and forever," acted in one way "yesterday" but acts in an altogether different way "today."\*

In the history of Protestant thought a vast body of literature has been written seeking to defend the literal credibility of Biblical nature miracles, but such reasoning has never sprung from the real soul of the Protestant mind which has generally unintentionally disclosed its more basic and instinctive judgment that deep in its heart it knows it is trying to defend as true things it knows are not true. The sincerity of such writings no one would question, but the very manner in which the arguments are strained and belabored betray the feeling that the Protestant mind has forced itself to defend the literal credibility of things for which it really has no stomach. To examine this Protestant apologetic for nature miracles would lead us far afield bringing a needless confusion into our thinking. Such processes of reasoning always divert the mind from the really fundamental truth of the Gospels and do a great injustice to their essential mission and message. The true significance and Divine Greatness of Christ is in no way dependent on such matters. Whether He actually did or did not do these marvelous things with material phenomena two thousand years ago makes not the slightest difference. Of far greater import, we wish to know of marvelous things which have happened and may yet happen, not to matter but to men, the transformations wrought by the power of the Spirit of

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\*See *The Modern Use of the Bible*, by Doctor Fosdick, Chapter V on "Miracle and Law."



God upon living men, changing their characters into new and different kinds of men. We seek the great contemporary Reality—a living experience of the Living God! If we read these nature miracle stories of the Gospels with that end in mind our efforts will find a sane and satisfying reward.

To do justice to these ancient writers we must remember they lived in a pre-scientific era in which men did not express their thought, relative to natural phenomena, in the manner in which we express our modern mind upon such matters. And, furthermore, our literal Occidental mind needs to recall that the Oriental mind has always expressed itself in an allegorical manner. With these qualifications in mind we read the Gospel stories of nature miracles with deepening appreciation seeking to grasp in our thinking the core of truth for which these things stood in their thinking. For example; Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Did the Gospel writer who first wrote that story really intend that it should be taken as literal fact, or was he, true to the Oriental mind, presenting a great spiritual truth in a graphic, allegorical way?

Some of us have been in a terrifying storm at sea. One man on board the ship is highly nervous and full of fear. Another man on the same ship is calm. A man's inner state of mind has a great deal to do with how a storm at sea may affect him. The same thing is true of the storms of life through which all men pass. Was that the sort of truth which was in the mind of the writer of that nature miracle which tells of Jesus calming the sea? Was he trying graphically to portray the effect of that peace and inner serenity which comes to one when the Christ-Presence is felt in one's life in a moment of crisis? In their thinking and in our thinking an awareness of this Presence is synonymous with an awareness of the Presence of God conceived in terms we are able to comprehend. It is entirely possible that our dull, matter-of-fact Occidental mind has done a great injustice to many of these nature miracles recorded in the New Testament. Perhaps the

original writers never intended these nature miracle stories to be believed as accounts of literal fact. Earlier in this book I have referred to my personal experiences in that ancient section of the world where our Bible was written. To this day the Oriental mind, in those ancient Bible lands, is very different from our Occidental mind. Things we invariably express in a direct literal way they express in an indirect, allegorical way.

There is the story of the disciples who were unable to catch any fish until Jesus came among them and then at His command they let down their nets and drew in great draughts of fishes. Is this, too, a story that symbolizes some deep spiritual truth? Does it mean that the followers of Christ in their work of being "fishers of men" can accomplish nothing unless the real Presence and Power of Christ is with them? Anyone who has lived in that section of the world comes to learn and appreciate the picturesque thought-patterns and turns of speech of the people who live there today. It is quite likely that our literal-mindedness of the West has failed to grasp the real intended meaning of much which was very clear and spiritually beautiful to those far-off people. Perhaps they were not writing about supernatural wonders and marvels at all, but were writing about beautiful spiritual truths, allegorically expressed.

In any event this is certain: those ancient men, in the modes of thinking of their day, were seeking to express an abiding spiritual experience and conviction. What we need to do is to recover the real heart of their thought in our modern convictions and experiences. The core of the matter may be stated thus: God can do great things; He is immanent in His world; He is near to man. God's power does "break through" and can be felt in human affairs in the real world in which men live. That was the abiding spiritual truth for which miracles stood in the thinking of these ancient men. We may discard the thought-patterns in which they so expressed themselves, but if we discard from our thinking their expectation of great things from God we shall have lost out of our modern faith

its greatest spiritual truth. We may well be challenged to think of what would happen, in our modern era, if men would rise with high expectancy toward the achievement of great tasks, believing that the infinite power of God is still around us and about us to work marvels in lifting our baffled and confused world up from what it is toward what we know it ought to be. A modern man has lost his faith in God if he does not still expect great things from God, believing that His Living Power may yet work wonders upon the consciences and characters of living men upon the earth. Indeed, if we ever lose that out of our religious faith, we shall have completely lost our religious faith. Fundamentally it was exactly that at which all the miracle tales of the Bible were driving.

If anyone thinks the miracle tales of the New Testament are of a piece with similar stories to be found in all religions, he simply indicates he has never really studied the subject on which he presumes to speak. There is a high moral and spiritual tone in the New Testament miracle tales which is not to be found in the miracle tales of any other collection of sacred writings. But to take these stories literally is to do a great injustice to their fundamental truth. When we force our modern thinking back into the exact molds of such first-century thinking, we bring confusion into our thought and we miss the eternal truth which lies at the heart of the New Testament literature. There are many elements in these early writings which we cannot accept as statements of literal historic fact. Our task is to separate the passing from the permanent that we may more clearly grasp the eternal truth which is embodied in these sacred documents.

#### THE JESUS OF HISTORY

If there are elements in the Gospels we cannot accept as literal historic fact, one wonders what then can we accept as absolutely reliable. In the answer we shall give to that ques-

tion we shall not go into technical details. To do so would require a large book in itself. What we shall give is not the detailed process followed by scholarship in unraveling the problem presented by the Gospels, pushing aside the irrelevant and arriving at last at the solid core of unassailable historical fact, but we shall give only the main conclusion. Those who may wish the details of how this main conclusion has been arrived at after generations of patient and reverent Christian scholarship are referred to the innumerable books on New Testament textual and higher criticism, especially as such studies are related to the Gospels.

After one has gone through the Gospels—in the interest of historic truth—with a critical fine-tooth comb, detecting this and that which seems not to have belonged to the original facts of the life of Jesus, but to be miracle tales or beautiful legends which grew up around and about Jesus after He left the earth; after one has discarded, as historically unreliable, many things—and of course scholarship is guided here not by caprice and prejudice but by well defined scholarly rules of procedure—after one has gone as far in such a process as one can, one discovers *the Jesus of history is left*. The historic Jesus, in the hands of critical scholarship, does not turn out to be a mere myth of men's religious imagination. He is a solid biographical fact. It is as impossible to prove that He never existed as to prove that Napoleon, Cæsar, Washington or Lincoln never existed and are therefore but mythological phantoms of men's imaginations and not solid flesh and blood historical characters. What this means may not at first be apparent. It has tremendous meaning! A little over one hundred years ago critics of Christianity assailed the historicity of Jesus. They attempted to prove that our whole structure of religious faith was built upon a phantom figure, a Jesus who really never lived and who was but a mythological figure of men's pious imaginations. There is no reputable scholar anywhere in the world today who makes any such statement.

The ground was cut from underneath the position of those who contended that Jesus was but a myth when it was pointed out with devastating scholarly logic that if the same processes of historical criticism, which had led to that conclusion, were also followed in critically studying the life of Washington, Cæsar, Napoleon or Lincoln it could also be proved that none of these men ever lived either. It could, indeed, be proved that no outstanding character of history ever lived, that all history was but a collection of myths and fables and nothing had really ever happened upon the earth in past ages. Everything was myth and imagination! In the face of this devastating attack these attackers of the historicity of Jesus made a hasty retreat and have remained silent ever since. It might be added parenthetically that it is not uncommon to encounter some modern radical who flatters himself by thinking he is intellectually quite emancipated and advanced who will make the statement that Jesus is very likely but an ancient myth, utterly oblivious of the fact that no reputable scholarship, Christian or non-Christian, makes any such statement. The historicity of Jesus is a solid and well attested fact, no longer questioned by anyone worthy of respectful attention.

Furthermore, the Gospels as ancient written documents are also facts like the facts that the Declaration of Independence, Shakespeare's plays and Magna Charta were once actually written by whomsoever they were written, are facts. It is a fact that these Gospels were written and were written a very long time ago. But behind the Gospels there lies a Greater Fact. We go *beyond* the Gospels. The foundations of our faith go back to that which came before the Gospels were ever written by hollow reed pens scratching across stiff rolls of ancient parchment. We go back to the fact of the Jesus of history! He stands behind the Gospels. He was before the Gospels. His unassailable historical figure seen in and through the medium of the Gospels confronts us with the most challenging fact of history. Critical scholarship has not dimin-

ished His stature, marred His face or dimmed His voice. It has sought with patient devotion to make its way through any and everything which separated us from a true understanding of Him. It is He we have wanted better to know. It is His voice we have sought more clearly to hear, His image more vividly to see. Critical scholarship, in utter loyalty to the Truth, has "torn the Gospels to pieces," reverently removing the outer casing that it might better grasp the heart of the whole matter. This effort has been abundantly rewarded. The Jesus of history is more clearly seen and known today than in the days of many of our fathers. Such a statement may sound extravagant but it is a statement of fact of tremendous significance. Let us see where it leads us.

The Supreme Character portrayed in the Gospels is a portrait drawn from actual life. There is no perfect character in any other literature. The world's most gifted literary geniuses have labored in vain with consummate imaginative ability to sketch the portrait of a perfect character. That has never been done. The Jesus of history portrayed in our Gospels is the only Perfect Character known either in imaginative or in biographical literature. This is most impressive when we recall these Gospels have plainly in them many of the mistaken ideas and limitations of the mental outlook of the world of that day. Furthermore when read in the original Greek they show plainly that their authors were not literary men. They did not write in the classical style and diction of the great creators of imaginative literature of their time. And yet these simple humble men, writing these Gospels at different times, in different places and from different viewpoints, achieve one common thing. They all draw the portrait of a Character so perfect that they were overwhelmed with the conviction that in and through Him they saw the very likeness of the character of God! In the Gospels there is accomplished what literary genius, idealization and imagination have never been able to produce. There is but one possible conclusion to draw from

this amazing achievement. The Historical Figure they portray was drawn from life. That Figure could not possibly have sat in the studio of men's mere creative imaginations.

The early church existed before the written Gospels existed. There were thousands of Christians, who had never seen nor known Jesus in the days of His flesh, before there were any written Gospels. Christianity was founded upon a fact which preceded the writing of the Gospels. Had not these Gospels been written and had the story of the Jesus of history been handed down by oral tradition across these two thousand years, our knowledge of Jesus would be hopelessly confused. All that we do know directly, and very likely ever shall know of the Jesus of history is in those Gospels. That they may be—and undoubtedly are—inaccurate in some things need not disturb us, so long as they are dependable on one thing. On one thing they are absolutely trustworthy. In and through their ancient pages a Figure walks who lived a life so sublime in its beauty, that in His day many looked upon Him and saw—God! And millions since His day have looked upon that portrait drawn of Him in these Gospels and they too have seen God!

It is a fact that many religious teachers after they left the earth, have been made into a god by the imaginative zeal and superstitious idealization of their devoted followers. It is also a fact that many powerful figures of human history, whose lives were not conspicuous for moral beauty, have also been made into gods by men. Thus, Alexander the Great and numerous kings and queens of ancient Egypt and numerous Emperors of Rome. In fact, the men and women whom later men have made into gods and goddesses compose so long a list as to include every ancient people, and some modern ones. Making an unusual historical figure into a god or goddess is one of the most commonplace occurrences in the long annals of the history of human credulity and superstition.

Calling attention to this well-known human trait, critics of our Christian belief in Jesus sharply challenge us by saying

that is exactly what must have happened to the Jesus of sober historical fact. He was undoubtedly a great and very good man but that was all. After His death His followers made a God out of Him. The difficulty with such an attack as that is this: the God-likeness of Jesus in the very earliest Christian thought and experience rests upon the foundation of a Perfect Character whose portrait is drawn in those Gospels. All other men or women, whom later ages have exalted to godship, present an entirely different picture in two ways. First, their human characters are never perfect. They are always spotted with many defects. And second, the god or the goddess into whom this later imaginative zeal exalts them is never a sublimely beautiful conception of God. There is a very great distinction between the Christian conception of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and all other men-gods or god-men human imaginative zeal, myth-making and superstitious devotion have ever created.

The more critically we think through it and around it and about it, the more firmly are we convinced that in those Gospels we have a portrait impossible to account for in any other way, save that it is a portrait drawn from life itself. Mere pious imagination never could have conjured up so exalted an historical Figure. The most critical studies of the Gospels, in the interest of truth, lead us but more deeply and reverently to the conviction that in the Jesus of history we see what Peter saw—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" As previously stated, in their critical investigation of the origin and contents of the Bible Christian scholarship has been guided and abundantly rewarded by the conviction that no truth can overturn The Truth. We believe, and nothing has happened to shake our belief, that Christ and His original religious teachings embrace The Truth about life and about God.

The foundations of our Christian faith have to do not only with our belief concerning Jesus' Divine Personality but also



with our beliefs concerning His original religious teachings. It is a very dangerous thing for any man, church or social order to believe in the Divinity of Christ and, at the same time, grossly misunderstand or ignore Christ's original religious teachings. Jesus Himself said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things I say?" What was the original religion of the Jesus of history? To that question we shall now turn.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT WAS THE RELIGION OF JESUS?

THERE are two religions which have been identified with the Master. There is, first, His original religion in all its pristine power, simplicity and beauty. There is, second, a highly complicated, doctrinal, dogmatic religion about Jesus which became identified with His name after He passed from the earth. Our problem—long familiar to Christian scholarship—is to make our way back through this complicated religion *about* Jesus to the original religion *of* Jesus Himself. In this task lack of space will not permit a comprehensive treatment. We can only give a general outline of the facts. In this chapter we shall be concerned only with the original religion of Jesus. In the chapter which follows we shall be concerned with what later happened to this original religion of Jesus, tending to make of it a something-else.

The original religion of Jesus may be compared to a vast mountain range stretching before one's vision across an infinite horizon. In that vast range there are majestic peaks towering above all else. In the sketch which follows we shall focus our eyes upon those peaks and we shall look at them from different angles, seeing always the same great truths but seeing these truths from different points of vision. This chapter should be read as a whole. Parts of it taken out of the whole context would give a quite erroneous impression.

#### JESUS BELIEVED IN GOD, IN PRAYER AND IN MAN

We believe, as did our fathers, that the Master was both human and uniquely Divine. We are confronted by no prob-

lem which demands that we should surrender by one iota all that the Divinity of Christ has stood for in historic Christian thought. In exalting the Master's Divinity we can, however, remove His grandeur so far from our real world as to lose sight of the tremendous significance of the historic incarnation. We are helped if we seek to understand the Master as His disciples first knew and understood him—as a man, a human being “tempted in all points like ourselves.” When, therefore, we treat Jesus from this viewpoint the reader must guard against confusion. We are trying to deal with a human historic character through whom we believe the world finds its supreme revelation of life and of God in one who was uniquely sent from God. But to see this truth in all its magnificence we must more clearly see the Man Himself.

That Jesus held in high reverence the sacred literature of His people is a subject we have already touched on and need not go into again. He revered the inspired writings of His race but He refused to be constricted in His religious thought by the letter of any sacred text.

To the mind of Jesus there was only one solving word for the enigma of life and “the riddle of the universe,” and that word was—God. And there was only one solving word for God and that was the word—“Father.” The opening line of the prayer He taught His followers to pray is one of the most moving utterances ever spoken on this earth. “Our Father who art in heaven!” That is the deepest, most poignant voicing of the eternal cry of the human spirit for the Great Spirit that has ever ascended from our shadowed earth to the infinite immensity above and beyond us. Those words, first framed by the lips of Jesus, sound the depths of all human pathos and the heights of all human hope. If one would feel the full force of that cry, and how far it reaches, one should go out alone at night, underneath the stars, look up into that vast depth and slowly repeat those words, believing them: “Our Father . . . who art . . . in heaven!” That basic faith is Chris-

tianity's first and greatest fundamental! We believe as Jesus did in God, "Our Father."\*

Indissolubly linked with His faith in God was His faith in, and personal practice of, prayer. Prayer is a focusing of one's whole being upon the Eternal, speaking earnestly to the Everlasting God, and so opening the windows of one's soul that the Life that is above and beyond all life may enter into and live within our life. Nowhere do we put our finger upon any one thing Jesus believed in, taught or did that gives us a greater insight into the secret of His Divine Greatness. He was vitally and vividly conscious of God. He experienced God because He prayed to . . . God!

His belief in God and His practice in prayer of the Presence of God, made a tremendous difference in Jesus' life. It filled Him with virile power and a glorious radiance. The paintings of medieval artists of a pale, tubercular, pallid Christ present conceptions of Him which are not found in the pages of the New Testament. Few words were more often upon His lips than these: "Be of good cheer." Those words run and ripple and sing all through the Gospels. The Jesus of history was aglow with a radiant gladness. His vigorous, contagious, buoyant and unbounded joy was based not upon wishful thinking, nor empty sentimentality but upon a great faith which rested upon the eternal verities which lie at the heart of Reality.†

Jesus was fearless, daring, heroically courageous. There was a reason. One of the greatest things He ever said is recorded in the fourteenth chapter of John. Powerful political and ecclesiastical forces have spread a net about Him and are

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\*Years ago I read a sermon of Joseph Fort Newton's on "Our Father." Much of it has remained indelibly in my memory. Though I have not seen this sermon in many years I know some of its thought is in what I have written above and I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Doctor Newton.

†Throughout this book I use the words Jesus and Christ interchangeably. In scholarly theological circles there is, of course, a distinction between the words but for the purposes of this book it is not necessary to confuse the reader with that distinction.

preparing to draw it, to do Him to death. He knows and His disciples know He is about to die. He is telling them good-bye. In telling them not to be afraid He says, "Ye believe in God!" He knew as no one else has ever known that if men really did believe in and *experience* God it would make all the difference in the world in the manner in which they would face life and meet death with courage and heroism in their hearts. He was absolutely fearless because He was one of those very rare souls for whom God is real. In prayer He made His life at one with the Infinite Life.

I have been at night on the Sea of Galilee, under the full moon and stars; the night so quiet, so filled with mystic awe and wonder, the silence broken only by the "drip, drip from a lightly suspended oar." Far off, lining the distant shore were the hills and mountain tops where the Jesus of history knelt in prayer. Sitting quietly in the boat, my eyes drinking in the whole scene, I have caught glimpses of the secret of the grandeur of the soul of Jesus Christ. He prayed and in prayer He knew that God is. God to His mind was no mere speculative intellectual problem. Never once do we find the Jesus of history attempting to prove the existence of God by trying to refute the shallow arguments of the bewildering confusions and contradictions of sophisticated intellectuality.

The existence of God was as real to the mind of Christ as the existence of life. He would no more have undertaken to prove by argument the reality of God than He would have thought of attempting to prove by argument the reality of life. God to the mind of the Jesus of history was Reality. And on that knowledge He staked His all. God, to His mind, was infinitely more than a mere affirmative belief. God, to Him, was the *tremendous experience*. He felt the Life of God living in full and perfect amplitude in His life. No man has ever duplicated the Galilean's at-one-ness with God but He summoned all men to share something of that Divine afflatus with Him.

Believing in God He believed also in the immortality of the soul. He was not afraid of His rendezvous with Death. He told His followers the Dark Angel would not destroy Him. When He told them good-by He said He would see them again. And He did. He did not believe man is doomed to die. He knew, as all thoughtful men know, that we are born with dreams, hopes and hungers in our hearts which nothing here ever can completely satisfy. He refused to commit Himself to that contradiction of life which claims we are born to live, grow, climb and struggle heroically up and up to the zenith of the meaning of it all, which is—zero, oblivion, the eternal quiet of an eternal nothingness. Jesus did not believe Death is the last word. He believed in the supremacy of Life because He believed in God.

He also believed in man. He trusted man. He had faith in man and plainly told man He expected great things of him. With the Master this attitude toward man was no mere matter of soft sentimentality. No one has ever shown a keener knowledge than He did of the evil that is in man's heart. He never underestimated the rottenness in human nature; neither did He underestimate the goodness. The problem as He saw it was to arouse the goodness in Everyman, get it out and give it the upper hand in that universal struggle between dark and light, good and evil, that goes on within Everyman's soul. Jesus taught that man is divine in his origin, unlimited in his moral and spiritual possibilities and immortal in his destiny. He taught that the Life and Power of the Spirit of God may live in the life of living men and that without this Power man is only half alive, is marred and scarred and blind and crippled and helpless.

When we look deeply into His attitude toward man we see clearly etched before us His magnificent contribution to the unfolding and upreaching life of man upon the earth. He took human personality, the least and the lowliest, and He exalted its infinite value. Ancient Greece exalted art and

beauty and the uses of the human intellect and our legacy from Greece is great. Ancient Rome exalted power and law and our legacy from Rome is great. But the individual—the average, humble human being—did not count for much in the estimations of either of these resplendent civilizations of the past. Human slavery was the foundation upon which both of them rose to greatness and sank into decay. Only a favored minority at the top of their social structures were held to be of value. The masses were held of little or no value and their cruel oppression and frustration was frequent.

In both Greece and Rome the ideal of the democratic rights of the people was pressed to the fore on many occasions but it was never of a quality of sufficient depth to give it sustaining power as a basis upon which a really just and humane social order could be reared in terms of power and permanence. The truth is the ancient world never did become conscious of the "forgotten man." That man did not count. His face was lost in the crowd and no one saw him or cared anything about him.

By way of contrast one turns to the Jesus of history and stands awed and amazed before what He did. He took human personality, the least and the lowliest, and He magnified its sacred importance as a thing of infinitely precious value. When we see this we put our finger upon one of the most distinctive things Jesus did. His exaltation of the supreme value of human personality describes one of the greatest contributions made by His mind and life to the expanding mind and upreaching life of man. In His estimation Everyman however humble, beaten, baffled; Everywoman however bruised and broken; every little stunted underprivileged child was of infinite value. He dedicated His life to the complete emancipation of man from every form of slavery and oppression which frustrates his life and beats him down and back. When Jesus did that He put dynamite into the stream of human history. The influence He set loose in history will never rest

until man is really free and shall stand upon the earth a completely emancipated child of Man and child of God. To this thought we shall return frequently because it belongs at the very heart of the original religion of Jesus—a religion His followers have at times almost completely forgotten.

Jesus was no sentimental idealist. He was a realist of robust sanity who looked straight at the real facts of real life. And being a realist He saw and He taught that evil is real. He was too wise to attempt to give any explanation of the origin of evil, or to attempt a philosophical intellectual reconciliation of the existence of evil in a world ruled over by a God of universal love. In fact, one of the most impressive things about Jesus' teachings was that on a great many things He said nothing. He well knew there were infinite mysteries and endless questions which reason asks but reason alone can never answer. He knew there were uses to which the human intellect could be put in which reason becomes unreasonable. He knew there were great mysteries our human intelligence can never explain, nor comprehend if explained to us. And so on many things He said . . . nothing. What He left untouched is very impressive. He refused by His wise silence to be drawn into the endless circles of interminable speculative discussion. Any religion which claims dogmatically to know too much lays itself open to serious charges of intellectual insincerity, crass credulity and superstition.

Jesus taught intellectual humility. He well knew the path of arrogant intellectual pride is not the path by which men are led to a knowledge of God. He knew men never could find God at the end of an argument. He never taught that one must first be able to answer all the perplexing intellectual questions involved in an affirmative belief in the existence of God before one could avail one's self of a vital knowledge and experience of God. Men instinctively avail themselves of the life-power which breathing brings and yet few men know chemically and physiologically what breathing really means.



And so God *is*, all around us and about us like the very atmosphere we breathe; His vitalizing power available for our instinctive use. Jesus said if men had faith even so much "as a grain of mustard seed" they could come to know that this is so. He also said—a brilliantly profound statement—"Except ye become as a little child ye can not enter the Kingdom of God." What does this mean? It means that not until we put away our intellectual conceits and realize how little we know or ever can know, can our minds become truly open, broad and receptive for the grasping of Eternal Truths. Such an attitude of mind does not mean an attitude of ignorant credulity. It means an intellectual attitude characterized by a simple though profound wisdom. A child faces the world with eyes of wondering expectancy. In a universe of marvels and immensities, beyond our scope to analyze, explain and completely to comprehend, we grown-up children are justified in looking out upon it all with eyes of wondering expectancy too. Such an attitude will not close our minds but it will more sanely open our minds to discoveries of truths that are both great and glad with significant and eager surprise.

If we do not know this we do not know much—that the mere possession of factual knowledge is no guarantee of true wisdom. Some men are the victims of an over-developed intellectuality which has so smothered and buried them under an overwhelming mass of factual knowledge that they have lost all capacity for seeing life and seeing it whole. They know a great many things and yet no great thing. They have no answer to the greatest question human intelligence faces: What is life all about? Their minds are afflicted with a strange paralysis and inability to function with genuine robust sanity. Their minds are so open that they cannot hold a conviction, so tolerant that they tolerate anything, so broad that they lack depth and the stream of their thought loses itself in a marshy shallowness. The human intellect is a marvelous instrument which we should use to its fullest capacity. We are

led into difficulties with this instrument, not through its use but through its abuse. The intellect unbalances itself when it stifles the deepest cry of the heart. Jesus knew this. And so He taught intellectual humility. "Except ye become as a little child . . ." He would have approved Santayana's suggestive lines on Faith:

"O World, thou choosest not the better part!  
It is not wisdom to be only wise,  
And on the inward vision close the eyes,  
But it is wisdom to believe the heart . . .  
To trust the soul's invincible surmise. . . ."

#### JESUS BELIEVED MAN WAS LOST AND NEEDED TO BE SAVED

Jesus taught it is the evil in men's hearts that damns their lives and that it is from these things men need to be saved. Life was so sacred to Him that it was impossible to look upon the things which degrade and betray it as a mere lightly regrettable nothing-at-all. The soul of an artist cannot look with indifference upon the defilement of a magnificent painting. To the mind of Christ human life was like that. It should be lived beautifully. Sin marred, degraded and betrayed life. Jesus never took sin lightly. In dealing with sin Jesus was lenient and forgiving in His attitude toward the weaknesses of the flesh, provided the sinner was genuinely penitent. To His mind it was impossible for sin to be forgiven unless the sinner sincerely desired to be forgiven. In a moral universe how else could wrong be made right? He was terrible in His denunciations of smug respectable indifference and careless selfishness. He tells a story about a rich man at whose gate a beggar begged for crumbs of bread. The rich man died—so the story goes—and went to hell because he had done . . . nothing! Selfish indifference toward the needs and tragedies of others aroused in Jesus a righteous protest that flamed and flashed with burning indignation. Jesus was very tender and

forgiving to several penitent women of the street. He showed the same compassion to a common thief who was nailed to a cross beside His own. But to smug, respectable, indifferent selfishness, He poured out words of denunciation unsurpassed for violence of righteous abuse. (See Matthew 23.)

Jesus taught that one can only find life by losing it, a profound truth, which He stated, as He stated all His teachings, in very simple, terse words. He taught if one is self-centered, lives selfishly for one's self one's life will be eaten out and destroyed by the cancer of selfishness. He taught to avoid that very familiar human tragedy one must forget and deny one's self and give one's self in sacrificial service and love to God and to one's fellow man. Selfishness is the awful curse upon our human life. It damns our world to repeated cataclysms of horror, blood and brutality in wars, terrible political tyrannies and corruption, and the enslavements of economic systems based upon the inevitable injustices of greed. The degradation and destruction, wrought within us, and upon our social structures, by our own selfishness must be apparent to all thoughtful men.

There are two diametrically opposed commitments of life. One might be symbolized by a human hand worked by an artist into a form expressive of grasping Greed, reaching out to claw, get, grab and hold all it could. That symbol would express one of the dominant philosophies by which men live.

The Hand of Greed under the tutelage of civilization's cultured veneer has learned with consummate ability to cloak and cover itself with clever adroitness and smooth finesse. But in spite of its shrewd manipulations it is still the Claw of the Beast that degrades and destroys everything it touches. There are many whose lives are based upon this dominant motivation of Grasping Greed who are not conscious of the fact that this is the true creed of life to which they are devoted. They are deluded into thinking they live by a nobler creed because they express—but only with their lips—belief in a very different

commitment of life. Contrasted with this philosophy of living symbolized by the grasping Hand of Greed, there is another symbol—the Cross—expressive of the noblest dedication of life known among men. Those who are truly committed to it are few. When we refuse to deceive ourselves about ourselves we are forced to confess there are many in our Christian churches who really do not believe in the Cross. The motivations of living symbolized by the grasping Hand of Greed expresses the creed in which many of them really place their trust. No man really believes in the Cross or is truly saved by it, regardless of the orthodoxy of his professions of faith, who continues to follow a dominantly selfish way of living.

One cannot read the Gospels with a discerning eye and fail to be impressed with how much Jesus had to say about money. Some have claimed one-third of Jesus' recorded teachings have to do with money, how to use it and how not to use it, what to think of it and what not to think of it. He said a rich man worked under a great handicap, that it was easy for a rich man to lose his way amid the attractive disillusionments of things that gleam and then fade—away. "What profiteth it a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" All of these teachings about money were but a part of Jesus' general teachings about the deadly cancerous effects of selfishness. When Jesus touched upon the things that damn men's souls He touched reality. He dealt not with nebulous theory but with solid tragic fact. He was no sentimental dreamer. He saw deep into the tragedy of man's life upon the earth. He saw that man's life is damned and doomed by selfishness if man be not lifted by sacrificial Love and living up and out of his commitments to Greed. His analysis of the basic cause of our human defeats and degradations, the frailty, brevity and impotence of every cultural structure human civilization has ever reared, was and is an understanding of our basic defect, true in His day and in every day. Man is lost. Man does need to be saved from Greed which always has brought,

and always will bring ruin upon him until Love redeems his life, lifting man and his social systems to nobler dedications of his powers and his possibilities.

To this thought we shall return a bit later.

#### JESUS STRESSED ETHICAL LIVING MOTIVATED BY A GREAT FAITH

Some one has said, "The Christian is the person who honestly tries to live out the spirit and the teachings of Jesus. Nothing more. Nothing less." Whether Jesus would approve or disapprove this as a fair statement of what He taught, would depend upon just what is meant by the phrase "the spirit and the teachings of Jesus." If by that is meant only a feeling of benevolent good will toward all men, the statement falls far short of what Jesus' real spirit and teachings were. Mere ethical good will, sacrificial giving to philanthropic enterprises falls far short of what "the spirit and teaching" of Jesus was. He taught giving water to the thirsty and food to the hungry must never be lost sight of. But Jesus taught far more than that. At the foundation of all His teachings, the great primal motive for all ethical action was Jesus' tremendous conception of Life and of God. More vitally to relate the Life of God to the life of man strikes the keynote of the very heart and essence of the whole of Jesus' mission and message. Jesus saw the futility of touching life philanthropically upon its surface unless it was touched redemptively—and changed—at its center. He saw that men were losing sight of what life is because they were losing sight of this great fact—that God is.

The religion of Jesus is utterly misunderstood if one thinks that bringing water to the thirsty and food to the hungry is the end of the matter. There are many otherwise intelligent people who are guilty of a very erroneous and shallow appraisal of the teachings of Christ at this point. The original religion of Jesus was not a mere matter of sacrificial ethical

conduct. It was vastly more than that and one cannot twist it around and make a something else out of it without doing irreparable injury to it. Jesus' original teachings embrace some very definite beliefs about life and about God. If one has Jesus' conviction concerning what is back of life and then by reason of that conviction is irresistibly motivated to do good to and live nobly and charitably among his fellow men and for their sake and not his selfish own, one has the spirit of Christ, and is "honestly trying to live out the spirit and teaching of Jesus." This conception is absolutely fundamental in genuine Christlike Christianity which can never be understood apart from it.

If we make of the religion of Jesus a vague, benevolently inclined agnostic humanism, we cut the central nerve of it. Ethical conduct, however Christ-like, is not enough. Back of that, to be a Christian, one must have some very positive convictions about life and about God. If there be no God, no purpose back of and in the universe, if human life came from nothing, is nothing, means nothing and is moving toward nothing, then all of Jesus' words concerning cups of water to the thirsty and food to the hungry are simply empty sentimentality and benevolent gush dedicated to a surface alleviation of life's basic and utter futility. If all human effort, struggle, dreams, hopes, heroisms—if the whole thing is meaningless, comical and senseless, then nothing really matters.

The mind of the Galilean was more spacious than that. He saw infinitely beyond that kind of intellectual stupidity. Mere ethics, however Christ-like in sentiment and action, do not embrace His diagnosis of our essential human need. He stressed ethical living. Of that there can be no doubt. But undergirding that and far more fundamental than that He stressed a Great Faith in life and in God. In the magnitude and sweep of His mind He saw man is a child of God, alienated by sin from a knowledge of His Father's love and not until reconciliation is achieved at this point will man's basic defect

and need be adequately met. Whoever fails to see this fails to grasp the heart of the original religion of Jesus.

But life is a mystery and God is a mystery. How shall we think of God and of life? In answering this question in the light of the mind of Christ we are led yet nearer to a clearer understanding of His compelling power.

## TWO FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

Religion is a cry for a deeper understanding and more satisfying experience of life. The question is sometimes asked, "What is religion all about?" If the question is turned around a bit we get the answer to it. The deepest question we ever face—and it is a question every man faces—is, "What is life all about?" Religion is an attempt to find an answer to that basic question.

We all face life and we cannot help wondering about it. One looks around one and becomes aware of the solid earth beneath one's feet and of the illimitable vastness that spans an endless arch which is far above and beyond one. One becomes aware that man's life—whatever it is or may or may not mean—is alive in a magnificent immensity. One asks, because one cannot help asking, "What or Who is back of all that? What or Who made all of that? What does it all mean? What is it all for?" And so man upon the earth faces two inevitable questions. One question concerns the existence and character of God. The other question concerns the meaning and objective of Life. All men ask these two questions. They always have and they always will, because they are made that way and they cannot help it.

All men have some kind of answer for these questions, though there are many men who never know they have asked these questions and have found some kind of answer for them. But they have, because they live and in living they are moved by principles and desires which form the foundations

of their conduct and their experience of life. Something moves them. Some kind of motive and belief impels them day by day and year after year. As we appraise life's meanings and values, as we believe and think in our hearts, so we live. All men—good, bad or indifferent—worship some kind of god and commit themselves to a way of living which they believe will yield to them life's meaning and satisfactions. All men, whether they know it, admit it or not, do have a creed and by that creed—whatever it is, noble or ignoble—they live their fleeting earthly days chasing phantoms, pursuing delusions or discovering life's magnificence. What we think, what we believe, what we love, what we adore, we are. If our estimation of life is cheap we are cheap. The greatest thing life has to offer us is a great incentive to live. All men, whether they know it or not, do have a god whom they do adore. If life is to be lived with fineness and beauty at its heart the God of our life must be a Great God.

When we go back to the original religion of Jesus we find the most significant ingredient of it is not discovered in what He said or did. The most arresting element derived from what He was. What He did and taught can never be clearly understood unless one understands also what and who He was. Personality is the highest expression we know of the mysterious energy of the universe. One of two things is true of the Jesus of history: He was the victim of delusion or He was what He claimed He was; He was the victim of insanity or He was amazingly sane; He merely imagined His life was uniquely identified with God's life or His life was what He claimed it was—at one with God.

Men asked Him in effect, "What is God like?" and He replied asking them if they understood what He was like. He said in effect, "Do you understand *Me*? If you understand what my character is like then you understand what the character of God is like." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And in answer to men's desire to know what human



life ought to be like this Amazing Man pointed to Himself, to His kind of living of life, and He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus stands to this day the supreme revelation of life and of God. Than His character there is no higher conception of the character of God, and no nobler conception of what the character of human life ought to be like.

Men have never been able either to explain Jesus or to explain Him away. As was pointed out in an earlier chapter, human imagination and idealization could never have created Christ. The portrait we have of Jesus in our New Testament is not a portrait drawn from men's idealizations, but it is a faithful picture drawn from life. When He lived upon the earth He was question, He was wonder and He was mystery. And He is question and wonder and mystery still. . . . He has always appealed to man with a strange, challenging, haunting appeal and He always will because He belongs to man. He was the Son of Man.

Men try to ignore Him but they can never quite have done with Him. Why is this? Because He is life and life can never quite run away from itself. He appeals to us because He was one of us, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He revealed to us who we are and what we ought to be and can be if we let the Life of God take complete hold of our life. Jesus, in an utterly unique sense, was divine, the Son of God who told all men they too are sons of God. Such truths disembodied we could never grasp. Such truths incarnated in a living historic Personality we can grasp. And so the Eternal Word was "made flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth," revealing to us what God is and what life is and who we are and what we ought to be. Jesus was, and still is, deep calling unto deep, the depths of the Life of God calling to the depths of the life of man.

In the original religion of Jesus there is a revelation final in its moral and spiritual absolute truth. He has never been superseded and He never will be. He came out of Life. He

belongs to all of Life and all of Life belongs to Him. He contradicts nothing that is good, true or beautiful in any religion, philosophy or system of ethics. He does not deny nor compete with any good thing taught or believed by anybody anywhere. He fulfills and brings to perfect completion all that is good, true and beautiful in all religions, philosophies and systems of ethics. He was, and He still is, Life itself and that is why He is as vital today as He was yesterday. His message and His meaning will always be inexhaustible because Christ is Life meeting the deepest needs of life and answering its most basic questions. As we carry His message and His meaning across the earth to foreign peoples, we take to them nothing that is alien but that which belongs to them, to us, to all men everywhere. In proclaiming Christ we present Life to life, the Life of God to the life of all men everywhere. His words are still true: "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." It is Life life everywhere desires and is quick to recognize responsively.

The Jesus of history belongs to our world. He was born here, He lived here, He died here, and on this earth men were made aware of His transcendence over the dust and dark of Death. He belongs to our world and yet He came, in a way utterly unique, not out of our human life but out of the Eternal Life of God, "who was before the foundations of the world were laid." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness: and the darkness comprehended it not. . . . That was the true Light. . . . But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."\*

The original religion of Jesus was founded upon a super-

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\*John, Chapter I.

natural revelation of God to man and upon that basic conviction our Christian faith stands or falls. With that conviction there is, for us, no compromise whatsoever. The unique identity of Jesus' life with the life of God confronts us with the most amazing fact of recorded history. All of our explanations of that fact pale into insignificance before the fact itself. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life," are words that are still true and changeless in their meaning in spite of all the changes wrought by Time across the changing ages. In Him we still see what our Fathers saw, what the character of God is like and the character of man ought to be like.

Our belief that Jesus was the Divine Son of the Eternal God is a conviction that belongs to the original religion of Jesus and can never be separated from it without doing violence to the original historic facts. The Jesus of history did claim His unique oneness with God, His unique Sonship. The very earliest and most authentic records we have of the impression Jesus made upon others is exactly that. This is found in the earliest account we have of the life of the Jesus of history in the Gospel of Mark and in all the other Gospels. A tremendous, perhaps forever indefinable august Something inherent within His Lofty Personality, made men feel and know that in Him they saw . . . God! We may attempt to define this in exact words. We may theorize about it as an intellectual, metaphysical problem. We may write volumes of theological explanations of it. After we have done our best to explain this fact, the fact itself remains greater and more convincing than any of our explanations of it.

We Christians have two fundamental convictions of faith which embrace everything else we believe. We have faith in life and in God. We believe in a Christ-like God under whom man should live a Christ-like life. In the discussion which follows we shall explore this thought a bit more fully from a yet different angle, bringing together in a more completed

whole several elements, previously touched upon in this and in preceding chapters.

#### JESUS' REVOLUTIONARY PROPOSAL

The proposal of Jesus is paradoxical in that He so put it that the simplest mind can grasp it and yet the most worldly-wise can become confused in trying to comprehend its stupendous meaning. In what follows we shall be dealing with a strange blend of colossal practicality combined with a deep mysticism which defies our complete explanation or our complete rejection. Jesus' proposal was that man should surrender his life absolutely into the hands of God and should dedicate his life to the complete emancipation of his kind. In Jesus' thinking this proposal was revolutionary not merely in a spiritual sense but in a practical sense as applied to the actualities of the brutal injustices and cruelties of man to man. Jesus was against anything and everything that oppressed and exploited human life, divided men, races and nations into selfish competitive groups and made impossible the true brotherhood of man in a social order in which the Golden Rule would be taken seriously in a world order of human society in which the law of love would be supreme.

He said He came to bring to men the more abundant life. His teachings bear the indelible imprint everywhere upon them that by the abundant life He meant abundant in every way. He set Himself to emancipate no particular compartment of life, nor class, nor race, nor nation, but all of life, from anything and everything which degrades, defeats, exploits and robs humanity of its highest and most beautiful possibilities. His teachings if taken in dead earnestness today would profoundly change our present social order throughout the world. His religious faith which was pure and lofty spirituality was intended also to issue in practical action directed toward the complete emancipation of man in every realm of life. Indeed

it was this latter element which had much to do with arousing such hatred against Him, in His day, that the cruel hands and bitter prejudices of selfish, powerful and privileged men seized Him and had Him done to death!

There was dynamite in the original religion of Jesus. There is dynamite in it now! His original religion involved the most comprehensively revolutionary proposal for genuine human emancipation the world has ever heard. The word revolutionary is not used to imply that Jesus ever advocated the employment of physical violence. His challenge did not sanction the use of that kind of "dynamite." He was not that kind of revolutionist and attempts so to interpret His teachings are gross misinterpretations of His mind and message. We shall see this more clearly if we recall the historical actualities of the period in which He lived. Though we have touched upon this matter in a previous chapter we shall review certain salient facts of His age that we may more clearly comprehend His teachings. In addressing Himself to the problems of His particular age He dealt with the universal problems of every age. It is that fact which gives the quality of timelessness and eternity to His mission and message.

The situation in His day was this: Rome was supreme. The Roman Empire was a vast social structure—built on and sustained by force—which supported in luxury a small privileged minority at the top who lived off the slave-labor and tax-exploitation of the millions of the masses at the bottom. The Roman tax-gatherers, sucking the life out of the masses of the people as the tax-collectors drained away the life of the peasants of pre-revolutionary France, were bitterly despised in Jesus' day. Indeed in the New Testament we find the term "tax-gatherer" almost invariably included with the terms "harlots and sinners."

How could the Jewish people rid themselves of Roman tyranny, lording it over them and oppressing the people with grinding poverty? This was the question everybody was talk-

ing about all through the time of Jesus' life. From His early boyhood He had listened to His people discussing this problem. He could not recall a time when He had not heard the wild and excited talk of His race upon this issue. The Jesus of history did not live in a vacuum. The common people heard Him gladly. The multitudes thronged about Him eager to hear His words. There was a reason.

The people of His day had different ideas as to how to rid themselves of Roman oppression and to bring in a just and righteous social order. There were several parties with different convictions. First, there were the Pharisees who thought the situation was hopeless so far as their being able themselves to do anything about it was concerned. They believed the problem would be solved by the miraculous intervention of God who would send a Messiah out of the clouds, accompanied by an army of angels, who would drive the Romans out and usher in the Kingdom of God, which to them meant a political-military supremacy of the Jew throughout the earth. In this new supernaturally begotten social order poverty and oppression would cease and social justice and righteousness would become a fact.

Second, there were the Essenes who agreed with the Pharisees in their position. But the Essenes went a little further than the Pharisees. They withdrew from the world and lived in communistic communities in the wild and lonely regions of the Judean wilderness. They lived the life of ascetics, giving themselves, as did the Pharisees, to prayer that the Messiah would come quickly. And so, daily they looked up into the sky and prayed expectantly for the Savior, Deliverer, Redeemer, to come supernaturally out of the clouds with His army of angels to drive the Romans out and to bring the "Kingdom" in. Jesus never agreed with these views. He did not believe the Kingdom of God would come in that way.

Third, there were the Sadducees and Herodians who sought to solve the problem of social justice by ignoring it. Their

solution of the problem of Roman tyranny was to stand in with it, and by doing favors for Rome, Rome would do favors for them and make them rich and powerful. Rome did. The policy of the Sadducees and Herodians was "practical." It "worked." But it did not liberate the masses from their poverty and oppression. Jesus despised this solution and refused to ally Himself in any way with it. Their ringleader, Herod, Jesus called "that fox." The Sadducees and Herodians did not like that. They never have liked it, in that day nor in this day.

Fourth, there were the Zealots. What they proposed was direct action. Revolution! Armed uprising! These Zealots gave Rome a great deal of trouble before, after and during Jesus' life. They were continually breaking out in open rebellion. They were fanatic patriots. The whole background of Jesus' day is filled with this revolutionary specter and strife. Jesus had to deal with this situation. He became entangled in it by repudiating it. He became the innocent victim of it. He opposed the "Kingdom of God" conception of all the dominant elements in the life of His native land and day. This opposition cost Him His life. The whole background of Jesus' day is filled with rebellion and blood. Jesus is impossible to understand if this is not clearly seen. When Jesus was a boy there was a terrible uprising of the Zealots. After they were beaten back and down and finally captured, hundreds of them were publicly crucified not far from Jesus' boyhood home. Whoever does not know these things does not know what dark, bloody and lurid forces played upon the mind of Jesus when He was growing into manhood. The whole background of His life and time is filled with the bloody business of the revolutionary hopes and uprisings of His people, always crushed out by the counter-strokes of the terrible might of imperial Rome.

The Roman Procurator, Pilate, was forced to crucify Jesus, whom he believed to be innocent, on the charge of sedition. His accusers claimed Jesus was stirring up rebellion against Rome by posing as "the King of the Jews." At His trial the

priests and elders incited the mob to shout "we have no King but Caesar." This was done to intimidate Pilate, reminding him that he was there to protect the interests of Rome, and that if he did not destroy Jesus his lack of firmness in handling a dangerous political problem would be reported to Pilate's superiors in Rome who would recall him from office, take his life or banish him in disgrace, which was exactly what had happened to several of Pilate's predecessors.

The Roman Governor was made to feel as he faced the Galilean that it was a question of "His life or mine." Pilate decided not to jeopardize himself. He bowed to the dictates of the mob. Haling Jesus before Pilate on a charge of which He was innocent was a clever stroke on the part of powerful political and ecclesiastical interests who wished to rid themselves of Jesus because He was disturbing their religious teachings and their narrow and fanatical patriotism. The actualities of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus can never be understood apart from this whole revolutionary background, seething all over Palestine, during Jesus' life. The Galilean was caught in and crushed by the real issues of His day.

When Jesus used the words, "the Kingdom of God," it must be remembered He was using a phrase that was packed full of yearning hope, intensely fanatical excitement and wild revolutionary plans in the minds of the people to whom He spoke. In the background of their minds were the rumblings of Roman chariots, clattering hoofs of the Roman cavalry, the glint and gleam of weapons flashing in the sun, the marching of Roman legions, the crushing out of rebellion with public executions, hangings, crucifixions. His listeners' hearts stood still when they heard the phrase, "Kingdom of God." Jesus took this tense phrase and He poured new and entirely different meanings into it.

He was aware of the fact that one great military power after another had swept over the world, conquering with fire and sword, and in time was itself crushed and conquered by the



same means; the same insane philosophy of brute force repeated over and over again and always ending in . . . futility. To His mind that was a way of life of colossal stupidity. It was "a way" that always had failed and always would fail. He looked upon man's use of violence to attain coveted objectives as a symptom of a basic defect of human nature. He did not believe brute force could ever build anything of real power and permanence. Nor did He believe military power was the real conqueror of mankind. His penetrative mind went deeper than that. He saw it was the evil that lived in man's heart which was the real power that crushed and enslaved his life.

He believed love was the only power that could ever build anything that would endure. And on that daring faith He built His life and went down to His death in defense of that sublime conviction. He saw it was greed, hate, fear, sin that is in the hearts of men that degrade and enslave human life. He saw that to be "saved" from that sort of conquest and oppression was the supreme need of mankind in that and in every age. He scorned and denounced the stupidities of men in placing their trust, for the accomplishment of the great ends of life, in an appeal to the brute force of arms. He placed His trust absolutely in "the sword of the Spirit," in the tremendous power of Love. To His mind the power of Love was invincible because God is Love and men were "blind" if they did not "see" that this was so. And only this power of the Love of God could ever lift man up from what he was to what he ought to be. Jesus' conception of the basic cause of our human frustration and defeat, and of the method by which man was to find power over the forces which enslaved and degraded his life was either sheer nonsense or it was, and still is, magnificent truth, timeless and eternal in its meaning.

Jesus was never completely understood by anybody until after He was killed. Previous to His death even His most intimate companions never grasped the tremendous significance of His conception. Shortly before His death, "the Mother of

Zebedee's children" came to Jesus asking that her sons be given important cabinet appointments in that political-military world kingdom which she thought it was His real purpose to establish. In the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested one of His disciples pulled out a sword and slashed out at a servant of the High Priest. The whole account suggests this disciple was still thinking in terms of the old, out-of-the-clouds, Messianic hopes and dreams of the Jew of that period.

It was not until after His death that even Jesus' most intimate disciples really grasped what He meant when He spoke of "the Kingdom of God." What He taught—the Kingdom of Love living in the hearts of men and outwardly expressed in all of life's social structure—was a conception poles apart from the wild supernatural expectancy of the dominant thought and hopes of the men of His day. But He was misunderstood, hunted, hated and finally done to death. When we see Jesus standing amid the actualities of His own day, teaching principles which opposed the thinking of the dominant groups of His own time, and of all times, we see more clearly the compelling power of His message and we feel more deeply the compulsion of His love.

Jesus faced in His day the same fundamental problems we face in our day. He faced the problem of militarism, the use of violent force in solving the problems of human relationships. He faced the problem of the poverty of the masses, their economic enslavement in a social structure of gross social injustice. He faced the problem of narrow-nationalism and racial pride and arrogance. He faced, in other words, the problem of the oppression, degradation and enslavement of human life. What did He do about it? He looked straight at it, clear through it and down to the bottom of it.

Living in such a day what was the message Jesus proclaimed which was to save the world? He saw the issue was not one of ridding the Jew of that age of the tyranny of Rome. He saw it was an issue of ridding man of every age of the things which

enslave man and cause man to exploit and oppress his fellows. And so He struck at the heart of life. He had too much intelligence—He saw too deeply into the heart of the issue—to attempt to solve man's problem by readjustments of the surface arrangements of life. He went directly to the heart of the problem, changing life not upon its surface but at its center.

Instead of dealing in generalities let us seek to pursue in a more patient and analytical method the working of the mind of Christ. He saw it was man's lust for the possession of things which was one of his basic troubles. The acquisitive instinct is a part of us all. It is in us all. Jesus understood that. He saw how basic this acquisitive instinct is in all human nature. He did not condemn this instinct but He did say it was dangerous. The sex instinct is also dangerous. In fact the deep urge and drive of all life itself is dangerous. Our instincts can bless us or they can damn us. Our desires can lift us or they can lower us. It is not the use but the abuse of life's instincts and urges that plunges us into trouble.

Jesus never condemned the making of money. He never condemned a rich man simply because he was rich nor commended a poor man simply because he was poor. Jesus never condemned the ownership of private property. But He did condemn the lust for money. And to this day we know it to be a fact that it is the lust for money which is at the bottom of the major iniquities of our time. Jesus saw it was man's lust for money which was one of the major causes of man's enslavement and oppression of his kind. Jesus saw social justice is an idle dream of impractical visionaries unless man's dominant desire and lust for money was rooted out of the human heart through a commitment of man's life to values that transcend the satisfactions which money can purchase.

He saw also that, coupled with this lust for money was man's lust for power. Men like power. They like to lord it over other men. He saw how men pile private wealth on top of private wealth, long after they have accumulated all they need or

really know what to do with it. Why do they keep on accumulating more and more and more? Because men like power. They like to hold other men's lives in their powerful hands, controlling the destiny of other human beings. Jesus saw this, looked straight at it and He saw what it was doing to human life. He saw what it was doing both to those who held great power and to those who were the pitiable victims of such power. He saw this lust for power is the pounding heart and thumping pulse-beat that drives the machine of military conquest across the earth, age after age.

And again He saw the futility of dealing merely with the surface effects of this thing. The thing itself must be dealt with. The desire for lordly power must be rooted out of the heart of man. He applauded man's desire to become great but He proclaimed a new conception of greatness. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant." In His estimation arrogantly lording it over other men was not true greatness. It was despicable littleness. It was cheap and tawdry and futile. It has never possessed real strength. It has always succumbed to its own inherent defects of weakness. The Jesus of history walked the earth in humility and power. He yearned to share with man the secret of His Power which has transcended the dust of ages and the oblivions of time.

He told men they were confused. They thought it was money, and power over other men, they wanted, but as a matter of fact that was not at all what they wanted. He said it was a richer, happier and more abundant life they wanted. Money, and power over other men, nor the lusts of the flesh, would never yield to men what they were really seeking. He said it was God men wanted! To His mind it was with God and with God life primarily and inescapably has to do. And we are stupid if we do not learn that this is so.

He said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." His injunction sounds at first rather nebulous, vague and up-in-the-clouds. But it was not so. His mind was profoundly sane, a brilliantly

practical mind that saw clearly what life is. . . . He saw the restless, feverish desires of life. He saw what it was men were really trying to find. The integration of their restless personalities, the satisfaction of life's deep urge, the feel of its throb of amplitude of power, the inner harmony, peace and enjoyment of life, for which all men instinctively seek, Jesus saw could be found only by finding—God! It is impossible to understand the mind of Christ unless one understands this point.

It is at this point that so many who understand much of Jesus' proposal fail to understand the whole of it. What to do with our desires is a problem as old as life itself. Man has always faced this problem and he always will. Siddhartha Gautama, better known as Buddha, faced this problem in ancient India nearly six hundred years before Jesus was born. Buddha said the thing to do with our desires is to suppress them until we conquer even the desire to live, and so attain the tranquil state of no-desire which is the blessed state of Nirvana.

Jesus said a very different thing. He took hold of life's tremendous desire and urge to live and He said we should live; we should live to the very full, finding in our experience of life its greatest possible thrill. He never sought to suppress life. He sought to express it, call out all that was in it that it might be lived to its fullest possible limit of being. He saw the fundamental urge of life is an urge for God, in whom, here and now, life could only find its highest powers and abundant fulfillment. He saw it was only the God-filled life which could ever find that inner peace and power for which all men, everywhere and at all times, are seeking.

It is not easy to follow Jesus' mind on this point. An analogy may help our thinking as we seek to grasp His thinking. We shall use an illustration we can grasp, that we may better comprehend Jesus' thought of man's tragic incompleteness without God, which is so difficult for us to grasp in terms of convincing reality. The wholeness of man's life is incomplete without woman and the wholeness of woman's life is incomplete with-

out man. Union and fusion, not only material but spiritual, is demanded of these two incomplete halves of life if life is to find completion, wholeness and fulfillment. The life of humanity remains, here and now, incomplete, un-whole, unsatisfied and unfulfilled until and unless man's life be joined in mystical spiritual union with God's life. The very term holy means wholeness, completion, fulfillment. Man is unholy—that is to say un-whole, partial, incomplete until he knows and experiences God. The deepest urge and instinct of life is unfulfilled until the un-wholeness of man finds wholeness in a mystical spiritual union with the Holy God.

Always man—whether he knows it or not—has sought after God. He must. He cannot help it because he is simply made that way. Man has always felt this strange yearning for fulfillment of his being. This is the strangest, most significant aspect of his nature. The undying fire has always burned within him. He has never been quite able completely to smother it out. It has always been so in times modern and primitive—the naked savage stretching his arms toward the sky in a gesture of inarticulate longing; Goethe whispering as he was dying, “more light”; Tennyson writing:

“ . . . but what am I?  
An infant crying in the night;  
An infant crying for the light;  
And with no language but a cry?”

As Jesus saw it man is incomplete without God and only the God-filled life is “the life that is life indeed.”

If Jesus' proposal for social justice is cut loose from Jesus' proposal concerning God, the original religion of Jesus is not understood. Jesus was no mere social reformer believing that high wages or new and better houses in slums or any other such things were the ways in which the problem of social injustice was to be solved. He looked straight at men and what He saw was that they needed to be changed into new and different

kinds of men. And only the life of God living in the chambered depths of the life of man could ever permanently change man's inner desires from motives committed to the devastation of illusions to abiding motivations of goodness.

In so much of our thought here, let it be freely admitted, we seem to be going off "into the clouds." We are, but it is like an aviator who goes up into the clouds and attains a more comprehensive view of things than if he remained always on the "practical ground." The thought we are following here seems to take us into the clouds because we are trying to look at life through the eyes of Christ, that we may see from the vantage point of His towering intellect what He saw and better understand it.

Let us look at the problem from yet another angle. Jesus saw the strange and mysterious principle of the solidarity of all life, man's life linked to God's life and man's life linked to the life of his fellow man. All life is interrelated and there is a flow and pulse-beat, like the blood stream in the body which must keep pulsing through all of life if its every part is to remain healthy. The blood stream cut off from a section of the body, a foot, a hand, will cause atrophy. The hand or the foot does not, cannot live to itself alone. It is a part of the interrelatedness and solidarity of the life of the whole body and the blood stream of life must keep flowing through all of it. The solidarity of all life, human and Divine, is like that. A selfish life stagnates because it has no outlet and outflow into the life of others. Having no outlet into the lives of other human lives it cuts off the inflow of the Great Life into its own life.

And so greed and selfishness and all such things choke, thwart, damn, dam up and defeat life. Life must deny itself, that is, forget its selfish self, and lose itself in flowing out helpfully into the lives of others, if life is to find God who is Life. Life demands that we must give up the hardest thing we are ever called on to give up, and the last thing most of us ever learn we must give up—life demands we give ourselves before

we can ever discover what life really is. As the individual's life flows out into the lives of others God's life comes flowing in. Conversely as God's life comes flowing into the life of an individual the individual's life flows out in unselfish sacrifice, love and service, into the lives of other human beings.

It is all very strange, very mysterious but very beautiful and very true and we are stupid if we have not learned these things are so. Why this is so we do not know. All we know is that it is so. "Life is to *give*, not to *take*."\* The basic thought we deal with here may be put in this statement which is a blend of mysticism and practicality: a selfish life can never discover what abiding happiness is, nor what God is, nor what life is. This we see or we do not see, our minds dulled by a strange stupor, our eyes blinded by a strange distortion. These things Jesus saw and told to others in words that will never die. His teachings about man lifting in sacrificial love the burdens of his fellow men are always linked with His teachings about man's need of God. He never anticipated the ushering in of a righteous social order unless men carried vitally within themselves the Life of God!

And so Jesus taught that men must be "converted," men must be "born again," men must be changed deep down in the chambered depths of their souls. To the mind of Jesus only changed men could ever really permanently change our social order. He taught no belief in magic. He recommended no sensational mob psychology. The change in men might be the process of a slow growth in opening their minds to deeper understandings of life and in influencing and fashioning their characters into finer molds. But change men we must, and only God's life entering vitally into man's life and man's life entering vitally into God's life could ever really and permanently change men. It was this which Jesus saw and it was this which Jesus taught and He said there was no other way. . . .

The problem as Jesus saw it was to bring the life of man

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\*The priest to Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.



into harmony with the life of God and the lives of his fellow men. Always in His mind these two concepts go hand in hand and can never be understood apart from each other. If one's life became truly identified with the purpose of God, one's life would become identified with the needs of his fellow men and he would lose and thus find his life in sharing and lifting the burdens of his kind, in giving battle to anything and everything that degrades, defeats and enslaves his fellows. To the mind of Jesus one's love of God and love of man go hand in hand. The two are inseparable. One's service of God and service of man are linked in an indissoluble union.

If we propose to understand the mind and original religion of Jesus we must go a step further and seek to understand His Cross as He understood it. The meaning of the Cross of Christ has never been easy to understand. Paul said the Cross was a foolishness and a stumbling-block to many in his day. The Cross is a foolishness and a stumbling-block to many in this day. At the center of the original religion of Jesus there stands a Cross. If that Cross is removed His religion is twisted and turned and made into a something-else. In trying to understand the place and meaning of the Cross of Christ we shall concern ourselves here not with the later theology of the Cross but with how the Jesus of history must have looked upon His Cross in His own thinking. We shall avoid the use of hackneyed phrases and seek to express our thought in a terminology which will make vivid something of Jesus' own estimation of the meaning His Cross must always have in the thinking of His followers.\*

The original religion of Jesus was not a matter of wishful thinking nor of soft and dreamy sentimentality. His Cross cannot be understood unless one sees it in a setting of darkness. Man that is born of woman is not only born to die, but, it

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\*The treatment here of the meaning of the Cross is by no means intended to be exhaustive. Nor is it suggested that any of us can ever completely comprehend the depths of the mind of Christ.

would seem, he is born to be crucified by the harsh cruelties and injustices which seem for some strange and apparently inexplicable reason to be inherent within the mystery of human existence. Is there any meaning to suffering? Is there any benign purpose back of pain? Are the world's saviors and redeemers the victims of delusion? Do they err who think the universe is on the side of goodness? Does not a more courageous facing of life's inescapable tragedy demand that we must admit man, with all his hopes and heroism, fights a lone fight amid a Vast Indifference that cares nothing for his weal or woe?

These questions the Jesus of history undertook to answer and did answer with His Cross. Jesus uttered many words of surpassing beauty. But mere words the winds of Time blow away and life's harsh brutalities smother and cover in oblivion. Cannot man exorcise the power of darkness which overwhelms his life with tragedy by deep-breathing and happy smiling and the mumbling of the cheerful incantations of a Religion of Easy-Going Optimism? Jesus did not think so. To the mind of Jesus the Son of Man who would save man must taste the bitter dregs of life and descend to the very bottom of the abyss of human tragedy bearing within and upon Himself the sin and suffering of the world. How could beautiful words of redemption ever reach and touch and change the hearts of men unless those words be matched by one tremendous dramatic deed of vicarious suffering—the Redeemer of man bearing within and upon Himself the tragedy of man? And so Jesus voluntarily "went up to be crucified" that in this one supreme act of vicarious suffering He might open men's eyes to two great truths—a revelation of what the love of God is like and the love of man for his fellows ought to be like.

With a mind infallible in its penetration of the heart of Reality, He saw clearly that only through His Cross—not a thing of mere idle lovely words but a thing of actuality, of blood, brutality and shame—could man be led to see that there

is meaning back of man's suffering and tragedy—that the love of God is a love that reaches down through every darkness and degradation that ever overwhelms us, and that the love of man for his fellows must approximate that kind of love if man is ever to find complete emancipation. Only love could ever redeem the life of man, the love of God and the love of man working together in a harmony of love that gives its all that human life everywhere may be saved. Jesus came to set men free from anything and everything that enslaves man and brings frustration upon him. The Cross of Christ stands for the complete emancipation of man and its work of redemption will never be done until all men everywhere are liberated from every form of social injustice or individual sin that mars and scars and degrades our life.

It was so that Jesus envisioned His Cross and predicted with infallible accuracy the power of its redemptive influence over the future life of the world. He literally ascended the Cross of His own choice. The city of Jerusalem is situated upon a mountain ridge which rises four thousand feet above the Jordan Valley, on the other side of which, rising five thousand feet above the valley, is the plateau of Moab. Once across that valley it would have been easy for the Jesus of history to lose Himself in a place like Jerash which was a magnificent Greco-Roman city in Jesus' day. Its ruins, seen today, are in many ways far more impressive than Pompeii. It was a large city. If one knows intimately the topography of Palestine and the surrounding country, one knows how easy it would have been on that last night, under the cover of darkness, for Jesus to make His escape. . . . But no. . . . He would not run away. He would suffer and die that through the tragedy of His Cross man might see more clearly what the redemptive forgiving love of God is like and the love of man for his fellows ought to be like.

Was this crucifixion of Christ only a desperately dramatic gesture or was it something else? We cannot see to the heart

of this question unless we grasp—as nearly as we can—the difference between an attitude of *sympathy* toward human suffering and tragedy, and an attitude of *identification* with it all. For those who do not see the great difference between these two concepts, the depths of the meaning of the Cross of Christ will never be apparent. It is important that we see this distinction. It never has been and it never will be an easy thing clearly to comprehend. We may be helped if we approach the problem in the manner indicated in the following paragraphs.

Jesus saw the basic defect in man. Man was alienated from God. Jesus saw man's fundamental disease went deep into the marrow of his bones and it would take a long time to cure it. He saw the hopelessness of the situation of His own Jewish people in the grip of the Roman tyranny. He saw clearly that men are marred and scarred by sin and are slow of wit and understanding. It would be a long time before peace, justice and righteousness would be established upon the earth and man's inhumanity to man would be no more. He knew this meant century after century of human suffering and tragedy. His soul went out toward the suffering of His own day and of the many days yet to follow. He did not merely sympathize with this tragedy of man. He identified Himself absolutely with it all and carried it vicariously upon Himself.

Jesus saw that man needed to be drawn and reconciled to God. He knew it would take a long time before man's eyes could be opened and the stupidity of his selfishness and sin would become apparent to men. He knew the Roman tyranny would go on and on in His native land long after His day and the same kind of tyranny would go on and on in all lands across many centuries. He was too much of a realist to be carried off His feet by any beliefs in impossible idealism. He was under no delusions. He was a realist who looked straight at life. He knew the problem of the complete emancipation of man involved the tragedy and suffering of man, century after century. With this suffering He identified Himself in an abso-

lute way. Redemption would come through the suffering of Heroic Goodness and to His mind there seemed to be no other way.

In that clear light of sanity and realism He saw His—Cross! Back of His Cross He saw the Eternal Love of God reaching down through every dark defeat and defilement that overwhelms our human kind. It would take a long time before this redemptive Love of God would become apparent to all men everywhere. The Son of Man must needs suffer and die and the sons of men must needs go on and on suffering and dying, crucified on millions of crosses across thousands of years in the cataclysms of wars, in the cruelties and injustices of economic and political systems, until at last sense and sanity would dawn across the minds of men and they would see that without God's life and God's redeeming Love man's life upon the earth is doomed to futility and failure.

As Jesus saw it man would never find solution for his problem until he saw there is only one real life and that is the life of love. Only so would man ever come to know what life really is, who and what men really are and ought to be and can be. Men must be led to live the life of love. Only so could they ever know the Life of God because God is Love. These things Jesus saw and told to others, and with the suffering and tragedy inevitably involved in it all He absolutely identified Himself in His life and in His atoning death upon the Cross. Speaking of His Cross He said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." In His dedication to death He took upon Himself the tragedy of man and for the sin of the world He died:

"A nerve o'er which do creep  
The else unfelt oppressions of the earth."

"Desperate tides of the whole great world's anguish  
Forc'd thru the channels of a single heart."

In the crucifixion Christianity has always seen, and always must see, a supreme revelation of a tremendous truth—that God is Love that “reaches down” redemptively into the life of man, healing his hurts, forgiving his sin and saving his life from destruction. God is not alien and indifferent toward man. The Creator of our life will bring to completion what He has begun. We did not create our life, neither can we ever completely save it. Our life is in the hands of the Sovereign God of Eternal Love. For these great convictions of Christian faith the Cross has always stood, and always must stand in Christian thinking, or Christianity will cease to be Christian.

Jesus went down into the doom of darkness believing God would support and use what He had done. Was Jesus mistaken? If He was, then man’s faith in God is a delusion and we live in a universe that cares nothing for our weal or woe.

The New Testament does not close with the crucifixion. Had Jesus’ career ended in blood and the dust and dark of death’s oblivion there would never have been a New Testament. After Jesus’ death something happened! A company of baffled men and women came—in some way—to *know* His transcendent Personality had not been dissolved into—nothing. His triumph over death was almost immediately demonstrated. The essential credibility of the Gospel accounts of His resurrection is vindicated by subsequent events. The Church of Christ became a fact of history. It is incredible that it was born of a mere hallucination. The Christian movement became alive with power that turned the stream of history into new channels.

Jesus believed the Power behind the universe was behind His life, His teachings and His death. How has the apparently heartless universe treated Jesus? Was He forgotten in a few years, erased from the memories of men, His life but one more little episode in the story of the utter futility of man’s pathetic and impossible idealism? Jesus lived nearly two thousand years ago. What has happened since then? The Roman

Empire that sought to crush out His life has long since fallen into dust, but His emancipating influence has survived the ages. His redemptive power over life is still a tremendous living, liberating force in the actualities of our contemporary world. Jesus' trust in the universe, that there is a Supreme Being in it who would back His proposal, has been vindicated. After twenty centuries His movement still goes on. Still men are challenged, disturbed and haunted by His call.

Jesus was a mystic but out of His mysticism, under the impetus of His practical ethical teaching, there has flowed out across the world more practical ethical influence than from any other movement of history. The original religion of Jesus was a blend of mysticism and practical ethics. The two can never be separated without doing violence to both. Jesus' ethical teachings are incomparable but they were grounded in His convictions about God and without those convictions His ethics are left without support, dynamic incentive and drive.

The religion of Jesus is a blend of mysticism and ethics and we have no reason to be ashamed of that fact, nor in any way to apologize for it. It is not necessary for us to waste time in defending it against its blind critics. In our zeal for practical reforms and liberations we must never forget to see what Jesus saw. To His mind no readjustments of our social structures, which merely touch the human problem upon its surface, will ever solve the human problem. Jesus' proposal had to do with touching life, not superficially upon its surface, but deep down, redemptively at its center, creating new men whose new motive would be to give and lose and so find themselves, in lifting all life up from what it is to what it ought to be. And so in Jesus' proposal human tyranny, enslavement and degradation were to be dealt with not merely in one age but in every age by man working with God and God working with man that man might become completely free.

As we look back over the religion of Jesus we realize there is little religion and there is Great Religion. There is a little

Christianity and there is a Great Christianity. The religion of Jesus was one of two things: impossible idealism or the supreme revelation of ultimate truth. Jesus spoke of those who had eyes to see and yet they saw not, of those who had ears to hear and yet they heard not. His observation is still true. We see or we do not see His religion was Great Religion and our task today is to recover it, proclaim it, live it, giving ourselves not to a little Christianity but to a Great Christianity. We may accept or reject the religion of Jesus. No thoughtful man can choose lightly between these two alternatives. On this question the decision of man involves nothing less than the destiny of man. It is not extravagant to say a world which ignores His message and His meaning is a world that is doomed to go on and on in moral and spiritual confusion, frustration and futility.

The religion of Jesus is inexhaustible. In this chapter we have by no means explored the whole of it. We have looked upon only a few of its towering peaks trying to catch something of their sublime beauty and eternal meaning. There is no conceivable practical problem which human life faces, no deep questions about the eternal mystery the human intellect asks, that the religion of Jesus does not have some word to say regarding such questions and such problems. And always it is the Last Word that can be said.



## CHAPTER V

### WHAT HAPPENED TO THE RELIGION OF JESUS?

#### THE FLOWING STREAM OF HISTORY

THIS will not be a pleasant chapter to write. There are many facts one would like to avoid mentioning and pass over with the soft hand of blandly smooth evasion. If, however, the truth is to be served the truth must be spoken with candor and with kindness.

To enumerate what has happened to the original religion of Jesus since He passed from the earth would require the writing of the history of Western civilization for the past two thousand years. This we cannot attempt even in a very condensed form. We can only give a brief outline of certain tendencies. It is easy to look back with critical condescension upon past ages. We can pick flaws in them and point out absurdities; we can write them down unjustly or we can write them up in terms of a too glowing appreciation. Following either method we shall not arrive at the truth.

As it will be very easy for future ages to pass a too harshly critical judgment upon the stupidities of our present age, so is it easy for us to deal unfairly with the past. If we are to serve the truth in our appraisal of the past we must keep our historical perspective and balance of judgment. Our fathers were fallible men, and, like ourselves, were children of their times with inevitable limitations upon them. The original religion of Jesus after He passed from the earth fell into the hands of great and good men, who proceeded forthwith to explain and interpret His religion to the particular eras in which they lived.

It was right, proper and inevitable that these men should employ categories of thinking which their particular age best understood. These men sought to clothe timeless truths in the vocabularies and thought-concepts of their day. This temporary and passing vocabulary, intelligible to one age, became rigidly fixed and hardened into a terminology unintelligible to later ages. Thus it came about that Christian theologians with the best of intentions built highly complicated theological systems around and about the original religion of Jesus. This process began and has since continued the development of that highly complicated religion about Jesus, which has had much to do with bringing confusion upon us.

We feel a profound gratitude to all of those of our common Christian heritage, Roman Catholic or Protestant, who have gone before us in generations that are past. We are today where we are, in our Christian thinking and experience, because of these men of the past. We are profoundly in their debt. We honor them. We are proud of them and everlastingly grateful to them. In discarding from our modern belief some of the concepts they formulated which were helpful in their day but which are obsolete and impossible in our day, we discard such concepts with feelings of reverent gratitude for what those men of the past have done, and in no spirit of flippancy or light-hearted ingratitude.

The stream of Christian thought has flowed through the minds of men for nearly two thousand years. Like a flowing river this stream has caught and carried upon its bosom many strange doctrines and ideas which have come floating down to our present time. In nearly every incident, however, if we look closely enough we discover down underneath many queer ideas and ways of expressing their thought, these men of the past were driving at some great truth. That truth is still true though the manner in which it was once expressed—which was intelligible to one age—has become almost unintelligible to later ages. Our task is to restate these timeless

truths in language and patterns of thought more intelligible to our age.

The creedal beliefs of Christendom are the result of a process of growth. The same thing is true of the organization known as the Christian Church. There never has been any one creed or any form of church organization in which all Christians believed or to which they adhered. The division of Christendom into Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Coptic, Armenian, Protestant and innumerable other groups goes back across many centuries. The roots from which the stems of division grew date from the very beginning of Christianity.

If we were to trace the story of these many divisions we would be carried far afield. We shall confine our thought only to what happened to the original religion of Jesus in the West, which for all practical purposes, must be traced through the story of the rise to supreme power of the Roman Catholic Church. This great Church is itself the result of a slow process of growth. It did not exist "in the beginning" of Christianity. Many centuries passed before it could be said to be. The Christian religion has never been a static thing; it has always been a changing and growing thing. Our many different Christian creeds have all been the result of change and growth across the growing changing ages of historic Time. There is no final creed in Christendom. There never has been and there never will be. Only in Christ does Christianity find finality but Christ is so timeless and eternal in His meaning that He never can be confined to the limitations of thought of any particular age. As human knowledge progresses and human intelligence expands with the inevitable growths of the changing and progressive nature of our world men are bound to have deepening appreciations of His meaning and this demands changing creedal interpretations of His changeless Truth.

The slow accumulative growth of the creeds of Christendom is well illustrated in the so-called Apostles' Creed. Christian

scholarship is unable to trace this Creed beyond the fourth century though it was known to be old at that time, how old no one knows. The Apostles' Creed omits many things which later creeds emphasized. For one thing it says nothing of what the Church believes about the Bible. Later creeds of the Church, especially our Protestant creeds, some of them written in the sixteen hundreds, say a great deal of what we believe about the Bible. The reason for this omission in the Apostles' Creed is plain. At the time the Apostles' Creed was framed the Church had no Bible. Just what books were to be collected in what was later to be called our Holy Bible was a task which the Church Fathers had not at that time completed and it was several centuries before they did complete it. Nowhere, at any time, has the Church ever written a creed which expressed the beliefs of all followers of Christ. From the very first, as far back as it is possible to trace, there were many different creeds. The Roman Catholic Church never did formulate a creed which was absolute and final for all Christendom, representing a unity among believers once held and since lost. There has been division of opinion, many different creeds from the earliest days down to today. Again and again creeds were rewritten in the most ancient of days, and never has there been any creed in any age which represented the beliefs of all the followers of Christ. The theological systems of Christianity in the West grew slowly across the centuries.

History is man's story, his story of his life upon the earth. If we do not know this story we do not understand our present age. A knowledge of history helps answer our question, "How did we get this way?" The present came out of the past and can never be intelligently appraised without an understanding of the past. History may be the most bore-some of studies or it may be the most thrilling—alive with everything that goes to make up the pathos and heroism, glamour and greatness of man's life.

A knowledge of dates is essential to an intelligent understanding of our human story. We cannot understand American history if we confuse the era of Christopher Columbus with the era of Henry Ford. If in our thinking we dated the doings of the era of the manufacture of Ford automobiles previous to the era of Christopher Columbus, or if we placed our participation in the World War before the colonial growth of America and the era of the American Revolution we would become hopelessly befuddled in our understanding of what has happened in America. In the same manner we must realize that many centuries passed before the creeds of Christendom were written and the pomp and power of the Church had become a fact. A clear conception of a certain sequence of events will help us if we grasp a few dates upon which we can hang our thoughts.

Jesus passed from the earth in the early 30's A. D. Within one hundred years the literature of the New Testament had been written though it took three hundred years before that literature was gathered in the form in which we now have it. It took several hundred years after that before the creeds of Western Christianity took on their more elaborated forms. It was approximately seven hundred to one thousand years after the time of Christ before our highly articulated theology was cast into the form in which we Protestants inherited it from our Roman Catholic forebears.\* It took six hundred years for the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome to become exalted into the traditional power which subsequently came to be attached to the papacy. The Protestant Reformation did not come until approximately one thousand five hundred years after the time of Christ. In the meantime many things had happened to the original religion of Jesus.

For the first two hundred and fifty years of its life Christianity was persecuted by the Roman Empire. In the time of

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\*Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why God Became Man*), written in the eleventh century, put the finishing touches to most of it.

the Roman Emperor Constantine it became the State Religion. One hundred and fifty years later the Empire collapsed. Many centuries followed which are called the Dark Ages. There were many kings and queens who could neither read nor write. Feudalism dominated the European scene. The Church became absolute in its power and developed a theology of ghastly fear in which belief in a literal Devil and the horrors of hell played a dominant part. The clergy became corrupt. Many Popes kept mistresses openly and several Popes died of syphilitic infection. Centuries passed crowded with the moving pageantry of saints and sinners, horrors and heroisms, the Borgias on the Papal throne, Savonarola doing an "abdominal dance of Death" dangling from the end of a rope which was his reward for protesting against the iniquity of the Church. The limp bodies of saints hanged by the neck were consumed by the flames; a glutinous mess and mass of blood and viscera cooled in the ashes of fires which burned innumerable heretics at the stake.

For hundreds of years Christianity battled with Moham-medanism and time and again the Crescent almost conquered the Cross. For several centuries all Christendom joined in the mad heroisms of the Crusades in which over a million men of the best blood of Europe laid down their lives for possession of the Holy Land. During the Crusades the "infidels" were frequently more Christ-like and magnanimous in their behavior than the "Christians." Many things happened to the original religion of Jesus after He passed from the earth. The full story of what happened is an endlessly involved and tangled affair and perhaps we can best give the impression of the confused pattern of historic facts if we tell the story—with some repetitions—in a mixed and tumbled-up manner. It is a story in which there was so much that was great and gory, heroic and horrible.

Without regard to sequence in time let us re-emphasize specifically a few facts. After the passage of several centuries

the Christian religion strapped its mind with a doctrine of literal Biblical infallibility. This doctrine has tangled the original religion of Jesus with all manner of difficulties. For many centuries it gave the Church little trouble. This was because a second doctrine had come into being, the doctrine of the divine dogmatic authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

A bigoted Protestant bent upon a narrow-minded exposé of the history of Roman Catholicism is unfit to make a just appraisal of Church history. The Roman Church must be charitably judged in the light of the historical influences which tended in every age to make of her a child of that age. We can never understand our Protestant Church unless we understand the Roman Catholic Church. When we write of what Latin Christians did to the original religion of Jesus we write not of what they did but of what we did, because for over a thousand years we were all Roman Catholics. We write not of an alien but of a kinsman. We write of our Mother Church at whose bosom our fathers were nurtured for over one thousand years.

The supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church in Western civilization was the result of a long process of growth. It took centuries to bring it together into one highly organized, powerful whole. Slowly it grew into organizational power and greatness. It was given a great push forward by certain significant events. In the early part of the fourth century the Roman Emperor Constantine, apparently motivated by a policy of pure opportunism, declared the Christian religion to be the official religion of the Roman Empire. This Edict of Constantine both blessed and cursed the Christian Religion. With its proclamation early Christianity came out of the catacombs and old abandoned quarries and other such places, in which for over two hundred and fifty years Christians had been forced to hide because of the persecutions by the State. With great pomp and political power, as the State Religion,

which all citizens must perforce profess or be punished, the religion of Jesus started forward along the line of its greatest strides toward becoming a highly complicated, dogmatic system of theological beliefs and a highly organized, temporal political power.

Then and there the Christian religion showed unmistakable tendencies to become a very different sort of movement from that which its Founder intended it to be. Christianity in its early days was like a stream of rushing, living water, but it tended in time to become stiff and frozen into the hard forms of dogmatic rigidities. It tended to become an institution of oppressive power instead of the movement of emancipation it was originally intended to be. The movement which Jesus started which was to abolish human cruelty and tyranny, became itself, in time, cruel and tyrannical. It enslaved the minds of men with its dread power to cast one's soul into hell forever.\*

The supremacy of the Bishop of Rome was a doctrine and an acknowledged practice which took centuries to come into being. The man who occupied the see of the capital city of the Empire naturally enjoyed a great advantage over the bishops of other localities. He was close to the seat of political power. He enjoyed a prestige and was able to wield a political influence which was difficult if not impossible for the lesser men who held less favored places. In time the Bishop of Rome declared himself to be the supreme head of the Church. As with Mussolini in modern Italy, there was no one daring or strong enough to dispute his claim. And so the office of Pope became a fact. This high position has been filled by some of the greatest saints and greatest rascals of history. It gave an amazing solidarity and power to the Roman Church. When the Roman Catholic Church spoke, her faithful adherents be-

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\*See *Pioneers of Christian Thought*, Frederick D. Kershner (Bobbs-Merrill), pages 101-104 etc., also Chapter VII, for an interesting account of how this horrible doctrine of eternal torment became identified with Christian theology.



lieved with unquestioning obedience they were listening to the very voice of God.

The fearful power of the Church rested largely upon that familiar statement in which Jesus is reported to have said to Peter, "Thou art Peter (Greek petros, meaning rock), and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16: 18-19.) And thus the doctrine of literal Biblical infallibility long ago entangled and to a large extent strangled the original religion of Jesus; Christ, who came to emancipate man, committed man on earth, in heaven and in hell to the binding and loosing of the imperial power of the Roman Church.

Several things may be said of this famous passage. It may be a passage that was added to the original Gospel of Matthew. Matthew is the only Gospel in which it, or any other even remotely resembling it, appears. If Jesus really did say this to Peter, it seems strange there is no reference to it in the Gospel of Mark. If, however, Jesus really did make this statement, Rome's literal interpretation of it is another incident of the manner in which the original spoken words of Christ have been literalized into dogmatic rigidities out of all semblance to their original metaphorical meaning. The Jesus of history lived in the Orient and spoke in the characteristic language, not of Occidental literalism, but of Oriental poetry, metaphor and symbolism. Jesus never sought to bind mankind with a text. He sought always to liberate mankind with a truth which had wings and not shackles upon its feet.

The moment we—Roman Catholics or Protestants—attempt to bind the meaning and message of Jesus to the literalisms of "proof-texts" we are in danger of completely losing sight of the emancipating power and influence of the original meaning and message of Jesus. Historic Protestantism has been guilty

with historic Roman Catholicism of the attempt to bind the original religion of Jesus to "proof-texts" whose literal meanings have been stressed according to our respective desires to emphasize some of the things Jesus said and not to emphasize other things He also said. Jesus was crucified because He challenged the orthodox rigidities of the Church and of the Sacred Scriptures, too literalistically interpreted, in His day. It is one of the outstanding tragedies of history that in time His great movement itself became entangled in the very things from which He sought to liberate religious faith forever. In time His movement became shackled to a powerful ecclesiastical rigidity, the literal infallibilities of a Church and of a Book.

It is extremely distasteful to be put in the position of criticizing another's religious faith. Such is not our purpose. We are not dealing with Rome today. We are dealing with Rome of yesterday when all our fathers were devout Roman Catholics. Let no narrow-minded Protestant think that Rome is not possessed of a defense characterized by intellectual brilliancy, dignity and sincerity. Whoever, indeed, thinks that Roman Catholicism is intellectually deficient, does not know Rome's apologetics nor give to it that intellectual respect which Rome so richly deserves. We are forced in this chapter to deal with certain facts in the history of the development of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice because—as we have already said—regardless of what we Protestants may say about our going back to the roots of Christianity, back to that which was before Roman Catholicism—the facts are, for all practical if not theoretical purposes, the Roman Catholic Church is our Mother Church. It cannot be too strongly re-emphasized that from her womb the Protestant Church was born into our modern world. The blood of Roman Catholic mentality still flows in our Protestant intellectual veins. If we are to give a clear answer to the question with which this chapter deals, we must trace the answer through the story of the rise of Roman

Catholicism. In no other way can we discover that ancient heredity and environment which has so largely molded the historic Protestant mind. In no other way can we trace our Protestant theological "family tree," know the doctrinal genealogy from which so much of our inherited Protestant theology sprang. We repeat: the sole point in mentioning these things is not to criticize another's faith but that we may better understand our historical antecedents. Rome is the Mother of Protestantism. What happened to her in ages past happened to us. When the Reformation came, the creeds and customs we inherited from Rome were over a thousand years old and from these creeds we did not completely break away and return to the original simplicity and magnificence of the religion of Jesus. We deceive ourselves when we try to convince ourselves that we did.

#### A PROTEST AGAINST IMMORALITY

Roman Catholic historians freely admit the iniquitous condition of the Church previous to the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation was not a movement alien to the Mother Church but it was a movement native to the Church. It was born in and came out of the old Roman Church which thus gave birth to her own corrective forces. Good men differed in their opinions as to how the Church should be reformed. Some despaired of reforming the Church from the inside and saw no hope save in a complete separation. Thus the Protestant Church came into being. Other men, equally sincere, felt it to be their duty—and the duty of all Christians—to remain within the old Mother Church and reform her internal life.

Such was the position of the real Father of the Reformation, Erasmus. No one saw more clearly or denounced more plainly the immorality of the Church. His was the greatest intellect of his day, one of the greatest of any age. He did not accept the reactionary theology of the Church. He em-

phasized the necessity for a complete reorientation of the doctrinal beliefs of the Church that Christianity might go back to the original religion of Jesus. Luther and Calvin who were his contemporaries were not nearly so liberal and genuinely Protestant in their theology as was Erasmus. Practically every theological position espoused by enlightened modern liberal scholarship he clearly understood and lucidly emphasized over four hundred years ago. Had his advice been followed there would have been no Protestant schism and the subsequent story of Western civilization would have been far different. He was too great for his day. He saw too far beyond it for his contemporaries. They could not comprehend the spaciousness of his great mind. Ethically and theologically far more Protestant than any of the Reformers, he yet died loyal to the Catholic Church and denounced as criminal the radical Protestant leaders—such as Luther—who were rending Christendom asunder.

After the Protestant Reformation there was a counter-reformation in which Rome confessed her sins and sought to purge and purify her own soul. The Reformation took place both inside and outside the older Church, but neither in Catholicism nor Protestantism was it complete.

The Protestant movement which separated itself from Rome was not primarily an intellectual movement. It was not so much a protest against theological beliefs as it was a protest against the immorality of the Church. This distinction must be held in mind if one proposes to understand clearly what did and did not happen when our fathers seceded from Rome. They objected far more strenuously to Rome's corrupt morals than to Rome's theology.

If we are to understand the immediate background of the Protestant protest we must have vividly in mind the iniquitous corruption of the Roman Church. We must also see clearly that the period with which we are dealing was a strange mixture of much that is compelling in its fineness and much that

is damnable. To go back into this era to recover something of the feel, tone and glamorous color of it we may imagine ourselves standing in one of the imposing cathedrals of Rome over four hundred years ago. Its huge bulk and elevated altitudes overwhelm us. The vast interior is suffused with a dim purple glow which comes through exquisitely stained-glass windows. There is a smell of incense; the chanting of deep-toned voices echoed in the vaulted expanse far above us. There are mysterious shadows that waver before the idolatrous beauty of candles gleaming before images of saints, crucifixes and "Mary, Mother of God." There is a gorgeous processional.

The whole scene is overwhelmingly convincing and yet it involves strange contradictions. At one moment one feels the emotion of worship is all that really matters when one seeks, through the offices of the Church, to become conscious of the Unseen God. Rich symbolism and liturgical sonority expand and lift the soul upward in a quest in which dry processes of intellectual analysis are an unpardonable intrusion. Religious faith cannot be intellectualized. It stands before a Presence for whom our finite minds are no match. One cannot find God with one's reasoning faculties. One can only know God through the emotions. Pageantry, symbolism and liturgy are more trustworthy in matters of religious faith and experience than is the thin hard dryness of the coldly analytical reason. But what if symbolism be carried too far and the means which are directed toward a great end become the end itself? Is not religious faith then in danger of succumbing to that which appeals to the senses and subdues and captivates the mind to belief in magic provided it be magnificently displayed?

Many of our good Catholic Fathers of this period, who remained loyal to the Mother Church, refusing to join with the Protestants though they deplored the iniquity of the Church and set themselves assiduously to its internal reformation, used strange arguments in defending frauds perpetrated by the

Church upon the people. They sought to defend the miraculous liquefaction of a dead saint's blood or the worship of his reputed bones though these adorations of magic were known to be pious frauds. They reasoned thus: Does not the thing—saint's bones, blood, holy image or whatever it might be—false though it may be, direct the thoughts of the worshiper to high and holy things? Why, therefore, should the Church dispense with such practices? Did they not serve a good end? Indeed yes, but by the same argument one may clothe an Indian totem pole with rationality and give the odor of sanctity to any Winged Bull of Babylon or any Golden Calf of Baal.

In the period with which we are dealing they had made magic out of the original religion of Jesus. Whenever in any age belief in magic is strong, belief in morals is weak.

But this age was not altogether given to rottenness. To all who love beautiful things of soul and body: one cannot run his hands or his eyes over a beautifully carved chest or marble statue of the period of the Italian Renaissance, or look upon the titanic conceptions wrought in paint or reared in stone by the great artists and architects of this period and not be profoundly stirred by its greatness. This age of immorality out of which the Protestant Reformation was born was paralleled by fineness in many things. It was a strange mixture of the sins of the flesh and the highest aspirations of the soul; the adoration of Christ and devotion to Venus and venality; magnificent hypocrisy and splendid sincerity; an age of great rascals and great art, cathedrals, paintings, palaces, tapestries, silks, satins, insinuating velvets; the human spirit subduing matter in carved wood, chiseled marble, riotously colored canvas to shapes and forms of beauty in which the soul of art—a strong, frail, lovely thing—found release for its imprisoned splendor in matter. In stone, mortar, marble, color, curving lines and forms that appeal to the senses, a great conviction and release were brought to the spirit.

The immediate background of the Reformation is a mighty moving pageantry in which strange contradictions elbow one another. Great rogues, schemers, scholars, artists, saints, sinners, the Devil, angels, demons, heaven and hell crowd the vast canvas. In the moving picture of these times there are impressive rascals who captivate one by their delightful and almost completely convincing rascality. There are saints who bore one with their ephemeral and impossible brand of anemic goodness. The old gods and goddesses of pagan times came alive once more in fact if not in theory. Venus, Isis and Aphrodite, the goddesses of fecundity and lascivious pleasure, called by different names, were worshiped in fact if not in theory along with the holy images and saints of the Church. Was not the main objective of life the manner of living it, knowing how "to suck out its succulent juices and go swimming in them"? For after all what mattered it? Did not His Beatitude the Holy Vicar of Christ keep his mistresses openly in the Vatican and were there not lighted candles, holy water and a bleeding figure hanging upon a crucifix by which one's soul could be magically saved?

In the period with which we are dealing they had made magic out of the original religion of Jesus and they buttressed it with the stupendous bulk and solid mass of convincing stone and mortar reared into mighty cathedrals, domes, palaces and spires. They adorned it with gorgeous ceremonies and adored it with beautiful liturgies. They defended it with brilliantly wrought systems of theological obscurantism in which human intelligence, intoxicated with its abilities for subtle agility, so analyzed, dissected and divided the truth that in trying to find and define the truth they almost completely forgot the truth. The original religion of Jesus with His great emphasis upon goodness and God, mercy, love and human brotherhood, was largely lost sight of while the Church devoted her energies to the extension of her temporal power, the accumulation of vast

wealth and to her impressive genuflections before holy images and bewilderingly complex theologies.

This gorgeous pageantry of saints and sinners moved on to—disaster. Out of it all emerged the Protestant Reformation, and the dawn of our modern era in which man thought he would find a new freedom. But he was yet destined to pass through many catastrophes. The Protestant Reformation destroyed the promise of the unity of Western civilization. It shattered many lovely childlike things which once hallowed the hearts of men. The period out of which Protestantism sprang gave birth to nationalism with its fierce competitions and to modern industrialism with its cruel injustices and to modern science with its amazing progress and baffling disillusionment. Cohesion passed out of our Western culture. No longer could the West be rallied in loyalty around any one focal ideal or obedience. The era of each nation for itself and each man for himself was born and Protestantism became hopelessly sectarian. All promise of unity died out of the West with the coming of the Reformation. Henceforth a civilization which misnamed itself Christian became an armed camp divided by competing national and religious loyalties against itself. This fiercely competitive division now threatens the very life of Western civilization.

Protestantism too has been guilty of sin. She too has failed to bring Christ's peace and justice to the West and to the world. She has no right to look condescendingly upon Rome. Are we not both guilty of having failed to place our greatest emphasis upon the things Christ emphasized?

The Protestant Church has abundantly blessed the earth. For this we are grateful, but in our gratitude we must never forget our debt to the past includes not only our Protestant fathers but includes also the great and good men of the old Mother Church which for over a thousand years shepherded the souls of our ancestors, subduing their barbarity with the elevating and redemptive touch of Christ.



Church history is a story of strange contradictions and it can never be truthfully told in any other way.

OUR PROTESTANT THEOLOGICAL HERITAGE FROM ROMAN  
CATHOLICISM

The Protestant Reformation was primarily a protest against the immorality of the Church of that period. Had the corruption of the Church been corrected a bit sooner we would all quite likely be devout Roman Catholics today. A fair appraisal of the Reformation requires, however, the statement that the movement was also prompted by motivations aimed at economic, political and intellectual emancipation. Protestantism produced some prodigious scholars. In honoring these scholars, great as they were, we Protestants err if we attribute to them a complete break with Roman Catholic belief. In our Protestant creeds we continued the basic beliefs of the old Roman Church.

The doctrine of literal Biblical infallibility shackled the mind of Protestantism more severely, in many ways, than it had ever strapped the mind of Rome. An incident of this was witnessed in America only a few years ago when Protestantism became involved in the theory of evolution controversy and Roman Catholicism did not become so involved. This was due to the fact that Rome, through her more flexible doctrine of infallibility, inherent within the decisions of a living Church, had enlightened leaders who knew modern science and thus saved Rome from becoming involved in an utterly stupid controversy. Whether the theory of evolution be true or false has nothing whatsoever to do with the original religion of Jesus. It is a scientific and not a religious question. But great and good men in our Protestant churches caused us—in all sincerity—once more to become victims of the doctrine of literal Biblical infallibility which time and again has brought

confusion and division upon us, deflecting our thoughts and energies from the real fundamentals of our faith.

When our Protestant fathers broke away from Rome they thought they went back to that which was far older than the Roman Church. They believed in all sincerity they were going back to the original religion of Jesus. As a matter of fact, they did nothing of the sort. This is said not as a statement of condemnation but simply as a statement of fact. When our fathers broke with Rome the Catholic Church was venerable with age. There were innumerable beliefs and traditions which all Christendom of the West had devoutly believed for over a thousand years. Of course the thinking which led up to the Reformation had been at work for a long time before the Reformation actually came. But it is very clear from this distance to see that though our Protestant fathers moved in many respects very far away from the beliefs of the older Catholic Church, yet in many other respects they moved not at all but handed on down into Protestantism much of that religion which had grown up across fifteen hundred years about Jesus, as contrasted with the original religion of Jesus Himself.

Our Protestant fathers lived in a day when the absolute authority of the Roman Church held a high place. To unquestioned obedience to this supreme authority their fathers had been accustomed for centuries. When the reformers severed their ties with Rome they faced a difficult question. In repudiating the absolute authority of Pope and Church they felt they must substitute some form of absolute authority upon which Protestantism could be based and built. No modern historian, however radical and unsympathetic with Protestantism, can project himself back into the actual times and conditions which our Protestant fathers faced and not feel a profound sympathy for them and a profound gratitude to them for what they did. The Pope they no longer recognized as having any authority over them, nor the Church which for a thousand

years their fathers had recognized as representing the infallible authority of God upon the earth. What did they do? They substituted the absolute authority of the Bible for the absolute authority of the Pope and the Church. They took the yoke of an infallible Pope and Church off their necks and, unwittingly, put the yoke of a literally infallible Book on their necks, and, in so doing, they bequeathed an inevitable confusion and division upon their children.

Had we lived in their day we would have done no better. They were courageous men battling valiantly, according to their lights, for a genuine emancipation of the human spirit in matters of religious faith. In their hands the doctrine of Biblical infallibility was hedged around with many safeguards, such as liberty of individual conscience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in determining the meaning of Biblical passages. In doing this they unintentionally sowed the seeds of Protestant division and the ultimate breakdown of any literal interpretation of Biblical infallible authority over the Protestant mind.

This is said not in criticism of our fathers but merely in the interest of historical understanding of what they did and why they did it and of what has followed inevitably from it. They wrote in safeguards to protect the freedom of the Protestant conscience from ecclesiastical tyranny at the hands of the newly formed Protestant Church. For example, our Westminster Confession of Faith stated, "God alone is Lord of the conscience . . . church courts may err and do err." In its day this was not only a very liberal but a very radical step forward. They repudiated the doctrine of an infallible church, be it the Protestant or any other church.

No one can look back upon the work of the Protestant Reformers and fail to be impressed, not with how narrow-minded but with how broad-minded they were. Let the reader underscore the events of this period of Protestant history if he wishes to get at the roots of our modern dilemma concerning

what we do and do not believe. The truth is our Protestant fathers wrote into our creeds two very different doctrines of Biblical infallibility. One doctrine meant the Bible is infallible in its highest moral and spiritual truth. To that doctrine there can be no objection and it is a doctrine Protestantism must believe or the foundation will be cut from under her. This doctrine can never be interpreted in any mechanically literalistic sense. It sustains our faith with emancipating convictions without shackling our minds with impossible literalistic interpretations. The other doctrine of Biblical infallibility our fathers wrote into our creeds meant an entirely different thing. It meant the Bible is inerrant and infallible in its every literal word. It is this latter doctrine of literal infallibility that has given us no end of trouble. It has been the cause of sectarian divisions and intellectual confusions with which Protestantism is still afflicted.

The basic theology of Roman Catholicism which was taken over with practically no changes into Protestantism is founded upon a literal interpretation of the great myth of Creation found in the opening chapters of Genesis. The categories of thinking in which the Church's Gospel was expressed were as follows: our first parents through a sin of disobedience caused all mankind to be eternally damned. To save humanity from the horrors of hell hereafter Jesus offered Himself upon the Cross. Around these basic ideas a system of theological belief was framed. The duty of the Church was to persuade men to believe this theology. If they believed it they were saved; if not they were eternally damned. At the heart of this old theology there is great truth but it needs a complete restatement. It does not state with clarity and emphasis the original religion of Jesus. It is not His Gospel. This theology is supported by proof-texts taken primarily not from the teachings of Christ but from a part—and only a small part—of the writings of Paul. The doctrine of literal Biblical infallibility is responsible for this injustice which our historic

theology has done to both Christ and Paul. Paul's mind was brilliant and his heart was great. Paul's intellect was colossal. He was a prodigious thinker, herculean, magnificent in his thought. The theology of Paul is a highly complicated system. Its complete analysis has justified the life study of many of Christendom's greatest scholars. None but an uninformed and shallow mind could look condescendingly upon the profound intellectuality of the theological doctrines of Paul. His development of the doctrine of God, of Man, of Sin, of Grace, of Predestination, Foreordination, Election, Justification, Atonement, Salvation, the Church, Baptism, the Kingdom of God, the Divine Sovereignty, the Resurrection of the Body, the Second Coming of Christ, the doctrine of the Enemies of God; the Kingdom of Darkness; the Final Struggle and denouement of Human History—all of these things are handled with the intellect of a Titan in the profound and brilliant mind of Paul.

As should be expected, much of Paul's thought is cast in the categories of thinking of the first century, but at the heart of his words there is timeless and eternal Truth. This great and gifted man of God preached with convincing eloquence and converting power to that ancient Mediterranean world. The spoken words of most men are inevitably blown away by the winds of Time. It is fortunate indeed that this man committed many of his words to the permanency of parchment. Had Paul only spoken and not also written our loss would be incalculable. To understand Paul one must understand the patterns of thinking of his day and one must understand his whole system and not merely parts of it.

Christian theology has done a great injustice to Paul. Christian theologians, living centuries after Paul, took a part—instead of the whole—of Paul's theology, and lifting that part out of the full context of Paul's writings, they made that part the principal basis, foundation and superstructure of the Christian religion. Thus only a part of the teachings of Paul

instead of the teachings of Jesus became the most emphasized elements of the religion to which the name Christianity was given. For centuries the Christian Church has been emphasizing a partial Paulianity instead of a complete Christianity to the world. The religion of Paul and the religion of Jesus are not two entirely different religions. Both Paul and Jesus were enlisted in the same great movement. But if we take only a part of what Paul taught and we make that part the message of the Church to the world, we have a religion which is not the original religion of Jesus at all, but is an altogether something-else.

Not until the modern Christian Church sees that this is exactly what happened to the original religion of Jesus after the Master left the earth, and we have the courage and frankness to correct this ancient injury that was done to the original religion of Jesus, and we go back to Christ Himself and proclaim to the world His original religion, instead of laying our main stress upon a part of what Paul and later theologians taught, shall we ever clarify our confusion and become in our impact and influence upon the world a genuinely Christian Church.

An illustration of what has happened all through the history of Christian thinking will become apparent at once to any layman who will take the trouble, for example, to look into our Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith. The proof-texts which are cited to substantiate our creedal statements are taken far more frequently from Paul than from Christ. Always the theologians have turned mainly to Paul, and not to Christ, in rearing our magnificent inherited creedal structures. For fifteen hundred years Christianity has been emphasizing what Paul emphasized—and only a part and not the whole even of that—and has not been emphasizing what Christ Himself emphasized. This has come about on account of the doctrine of literal Biblical infallibility. This is a strange contradiction because Paul himself refused to subscribe to this

doctrine and very definitely broke away from it. He was no hide-bound literalist. He was the foremost liberal of his day stressing not the letter but the spirit of truth.

His writings disclose at least three Pauls: Paul the theologian; Paul the mystic; and third, Paul the practical teacher of great ethical principles. His writings are unsurpassed in their inspiration, beauty and truth. The quality of his rare and rich mind is found in such characteristic Pauline statements as the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians and in innumerable other passages which, after nearly twenty centuries, still glow with the Divine Flame. . . . "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love . . . I am nothing. . . . And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith . . . and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up . . . seeketh not her own . . . Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never fails; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. . . . For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know . . . And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Paul, next to Christ, is the most commanding figure in the annals of Christian history. This man became a powerful instrument used of God. The Holy Spirit illumined the mind and empowered the life of Paul for the working of a mighty transformation in the life of the world. Next to Christ, no life lived upon this earth has exercised a greater redemptive influence upon the life of man. Had it not been for the way in which the Eternal God used Paul, the Christian faith would

very likely have disappeared from the memory of man, submerged and forgotten under the oblivion of Time's destructive hand. To know Paul is to love him and feel thrilled and uplifted in his presence. But to know Paul one must know all of Paul, the theologian, the practical teacher of practical ethics and the mystic. Paul is like many another great and beautiful thing—to understand him one must not attempt to take him apart; one must see and appreciate the whole of him. If one does this Paul will bring one closer to—God.

Such a man was inspired of God. Perhaps a worthy purpose may be served if I devote a paragraph to an intimately personal statement. We Christian ministers have the necessity placed upon us to speak from our pulpits to living human beings who are facing the actualities of modern life. These people know, as our fathers knew, the old hurts, doubts, which have always been inherent within the life of man. As we look down from our pulpits into the faces of our people, week after week, knowing our own hearts and knowing theirs, we know what a tangled, confused and confusing thing our modern life is; we know how easy it is for one to lose one's way amid the bewildering complexity of it all. Before going into our pulpits we pray that the Spirit of God may be upon us guiding and illuminating our poor words that we may be enabled to open before them, for their deeper understanding, the Eternal Word. We try to bring to our people not our words because our words are poor and stammering and are of no avail. We try to bring to them the Word of God to man. For that Word we turn to our Bible and our poor words are based upon its Word. We find in our preaching there are some parts of the Bible we use more than other parts because in some parts, it seems to us, the Eternal Voice speaks with clearer accent than in other parts. We find, after many years of preaching, next to the words of Christ recorded in the Gospels we use, more than we use all the balance of the Bible, the words of the Great Apostle. We do this because in Paul's



words we find and seek to pass on to our people the Word that lifts, heals and redeems our souls, saving our life from destruction, better enabling us to face the real problems of the real world in which we live and to meet those problems with hope and heroism in our hearts. The Eternal Word was spoken and still speaks through the inspired writings of Paul.

When, however, we take Paul's words and try to fashion parts of them into a system of highly complicated theological belief, that is like a mechanically constructed thing, and we stress a part of Paul's words with too great a literalism, we do gross injustice to Paul and to Christ. We make the real Word of God of none effect by our traditions. We forget Paul's warning, "for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." We forget Paul faced in his day the identical problem of literalism we are forced to face today.

Paul wrote in the third and fourth chapters of his second letter to the Church at Corinth, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. . . . But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. . . . For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In reading and evaluating the whole of Paul's writ-

ings it is very clear that he vigorously opposed attempts to cramp, confine and circumscribe the eternal truths of God in the strait-jacketing processes of literalism. It is a strange travesty and irony of fate that in the hands of later theologians a part of the writings of such a man should have become the basis of a dogmatic literalism which has brought confusion and division upon wide areas of the Christian Church!

The important thing to note in this whole matter is not what Paul did to the religion of Jesus when it fell for interpretation into his great and gifted hands, but what later Christian theologians did with both Paul and Jesus when the elaborate theologies of Christendom were finally written, between 300 and 1,000 A. D. These later theologians, with the best of intentions, read into both the teachings of Paul and Jesus certain cardinal Christian doctrines which certainly Jesus never taught, and which it is highly doubtful if Paul ever taught.\* In practically every important particular the crudely literalistic and unethical elements of their theology were vigorously challenged by their more enlightened and liberal-minded contemporaries, who saw as clearly as any of us do today that these theologies were gross misrepresentations of the original religion of Jesus. For example, Anselm's "satisfaction" theory of the Atonement written in the eleventh century was vigorously attacked by Abelard. But Abelard's influence was shattered by Bernard of Clairvaux whose theology was even cruder than that of Anselm.† The romance of Abelard and Heloise—one of the great love tragedies of

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\*See *Liberal Christianity*, by Dr. William Pierson Merrill (The Macmillan Company), a most excellent discussion in Chapter IV. The whole book is invaluable. See also Harnack's *What Is Christianity?* and *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, by Deissmann.

†In the latter part of the fourth century—nearly four hundred years after the time of Christ—a theologian by the name of Gregory of Nyssa formulated a theory of the Atonement which taught that Christ's suffering upon the Cross was a ransom paid to the Devil for the salvation of humanity. This belief was not seriously challenged until the time of Anselm (eleventh century) who declared Christ's death was a ransom paid to God instead of to the Devil. Bernard even found Anselm's theology too liberal and held to the older view of Gregory of Nyssa.

history—provided Bernard with all the ammunition he needed utterly to blast Abelard. And so truth was crushed but only to rise again. The theological position of Abelard was never more earnestly proclaimed than it is today—after the passing of seven centuries.\*

This chapter's most serious import can best be focused and left upon the mind of the reader by briefly re-emphasizing the thought that the constant peril of religion is its persistent tendency toward an adamant fixity of belief and laxity and cowardice in dealing with real moral issues. It tends to become safe, soft and easy. It drifts unconsciously toward acquiescence in the cruelties, inequalities and injustices of the world instead of fearlessly and forever giving battle to all such things. Christianity shamefully evades its manifest duty when it lapses into an easy-going acquiescence with things as they are. Instead of changing the currents of history it drifts easily with them toward disaster.

The most serious thing that has happened to the original religion of Jesus is this: it began as a movement of flaming faith and living courage which required a high adventure with God in Christ. It took courage to be a Christian in those early centuries. The movement called for all that was creative, fearless, heroic in the heart of man linked through Christ to the heart of God for the complete transformation of the actualities of human society. But in time this great movement became wealthy, safe, satisfied, comfortable and easy. Its mind became stiff and stereotyped. Its flaming passion for redemptive righteousness cooled and congealed into the hard and frozen rigidities of ecclesiasticism and dogmatic theological literalisms.

The Church which was commissioned to change the world,

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\*Henry Ward Beecher preached Abelard's doctrine of the Atonement one hundred years ago. See Chapter IX *Pioneers of Christian Thought*, by Dean Frederick D. Kershner, published by Bobbs-Merrill. The whole book is beautifully written and is brilliant in scholarship. It gives the history of Christian theology told in a manner which is of fascinating interest to laity and clergy alike.

itself surrendered to and became like the world, too often tacitly in league with vested interests, privileged classes, oppressive economic systems and the diabolical machinery of war. The movement which started out to emancipate life became itself, in time, a powerful instrument for the enslavement of life. One of the most glaring examples, in quite recent times, of this tendency within the Church toward adamant fixity of stereotyped belief and laxity and cowardice in matters of morals is found in the story of the Church of Christ in Russia. The liberators of modern Russia, who have overthrown a tyranny of centuries, were men who were outside the Christian movement because the Christian Church in Russia was solidly entrenched with the forces of human oppression. It is not to be wondered at that these revolutionists called this un-Christ-like religion "the opiate of the people" and turned in their revolutionary fury against it.

In this chapter the reader must not forget—lest we lose our perspective—that we have been engaged in dealing with the worst side of historic Christianity. The picture we have drawn is not the whole truth. It is only part of the truth. There is another side to the story—a great and good side. Christ has always lived somewhere, in every age, in the life of His Church, Roman Catholic and Protestant. The Light never has gone out, though there have been times when it was a very small light shining in a very great darkness. . . .

A further qualifying statement should be made in the interest of historical perspective and appreciation. Jesus and many elements of traditional Christianity will always belong together. To Him there will always belong every great cathedral and work of art which have been created in honor of His name. Every litany ever recited, every saintly Christian life ever lived, every great theological doctrine ever formulated—everything men have done by way of paying tribute to Jesus—all of these things belong to our rich Christian heritage. None of us is called upon to cut loose abruptly from the past, wilfully disre-

garding the ennobling elements which have grown with cumulative power across the ages and enriched our heritage with so many beautiful Christian traditions, forms and customs.

There are perhaps some Christian groups which never shall be able entirely to separate the religion of Jesus from the religion that has grown up around and about Jesus. In too many ways in the life of these groups the very bones and tissues of these two religions have perhaps grown too closely together and become one, been one, for too many ages for them ever to hope to cut them entirely apart. If it were done perhaps much that is infinitely precious and beautiful through long continued tradition and usage would be lost. In so many ways these two religions have lived together for so long in one great House of Faith that perhaps they never should be separated. The twain have become one flesh. Perhaps, historically, in a certain sense, what has thus been joined together man should never seek to put asunder. Perhaps for many centuries to come, Christ and traditional doctrinal Christianity—these two, in many ways, very different religions—should go on living together in one great House of Faith. Mayhap there be millions of people who in no other way could be brought to God, save as Rome brings them. . . .

These things may be true of Roman Catholicism—and we wish her well in her work upon the earth—but these things are not for us. We are heirs of an altogether different religious tradition. We are children of the Reformation. Our fathers dared greatly for religious liberty and truth that would make men free. Our duty is clear. We must follow to its logical end the path our Protestant fathers set before us. We must complete the Reformation they began. We must, as nearly as we can, cut back through traditional Christianity to Christ, back through the centuries-old religion about Jesus to that fresh, young, vital first-century religion of Jesus. In no other way can we be true to our traditions, be worthy Protestant sons of our Protestant sires. We must stand—as God gives us to see

it—for the complete emancipation of the human mind and liberation of the human spirit until the last darkness that oppresses our human life shall have been driven from the earth by the Light of the world! In this task we do not seek to condemn any other religious groups. On the contrary, we earnestly desire to co-operate with all men and movements—by whatever name they may be called—who love goodness and God and who seek to make righteousness and justice a reality upon the earth. Good men and true have always differed in their religious convictions and, perhaps, they always will. Coercion in any form has no place in any Christian movement. The only really powerful weapon religion has ever held in her hands is Love and only of Love can it be said, “Love never fails.”\*

These questions we can no longer evade. What was the original religion of Jesus? What happened to the original religion of Jesus? When modern Protestantism, fundamentalist and liberal, looks squarely at these challenging questions, and, divesting our minds of prejudice, we pledge ourselves to search out their truthful answers, our duty will become very clear to us. We will cut back through Christianity to Christ, back through the centuries-old religion about Jesus to the original religion of Jesus. And we shall know the truth that will make us and our children free and we shall dedicate our lives and their lives to it.

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\*I Corinthians 13:8.

END OF  
BOOK ONE  
WHICH WAS ENTITLED  
“YESTERDAY”

BOOK TWO

TODAY

A SURVEY OF WORLD ISSUES CHRISTIANITY  
FACES TODAY





## CHAPTER VI

### THE WORLD WE REALLY LIVE IN

THE world in which we moderns live is a very different place from that in which our fathers lived. The general frame in which our life has been set for centuries is being splintered by forces apparently beyond our control. There are definite causes whose roots go far back into the past which have brought the modern world into being with its distinctively modern problems. When we cast about to discover the major cause which has suddenly precipitated us into a world so different from that in which our fathers lived we are able to put our finger upon one cause—modern science—which, more than anything else, has ushered us into this strange, new world. It is a world fraught with unlimited possibilities for an, as yet, undreamed of beauty and splendor in the life of man. It is a world fraught with possibilities of irreparable disaster. Science has created the modern world which is astoundingly different from the world of all pre-scientific eras and ways of thinking. Science was born a long time ago. There were faint glimmerings of it and a few impressive achievements in its name in ancient Egypt and Greece and in other civilizations of antiquity. But science as we moderns understand it and have employed it was not born until about three hundred years ago. In the past one hundred years it has almost completely revolutionized the life and thought of Western civilization and its influence for good and for ill has profoundly affected the entire world. It has not only changed the face of the earth but it has made and molded an entirely new attitude of mind. It has revolutionized our thinking.

Modern science has revealed a universe of staggering im-

mentis and mystery. The modern mind is bewildered when it faces this realm of infinity in which we now know we are living. We should freely admit it is a desperately difficult thing for many modern minds, dazed by the magnitude of this galactic immensity in which life is set in a matrix of matter which defies scientific analysis of its ultimate mysterious energy, to believe in the existence of God or the significance of man. The cause of religion will not be advanced by minimizing or ignoring the intellectual aspects of this problem. Modern science has hurled us into a new world in which we find ourselves spending a few fleeting days upon a tiny dust mote that is speeding eighteen and one-half miles a second through endless space, with the star nearest to our solar system twenty-five trillions of miles away. Never before have men been required to look into so vast and bottomless an abyss of the unknown and unknowable. Never before have we seemed to be such pygmies living amid a reality so vast and so indifferent to our weal or woe. We have been forced, whether we wanted to or not, to focus our thought upon the mystery of the origin of life, a question modern science has raised but which it has been unable to answer. This question has issued and climaxed in a far deeper one which is concerned not only with life's origin but with its mysterious meaning. Protestantism is the intellectual child of the rise and spread of the spirit of the Renaissance. And so is modern science. Protestantism and modern science, both the direct and legitimate children of the Renaissance, were conceived in the same womb at the same time and both were born into the modern world in the same historic era. The modern scientific spirit of free and open inquiry is one no sound religious faith should wish to suppress. The Power that brought us into being gave us minds. We are endowed with a vast intellectual curiosity, an insatiable desire to know. This passion of the mind for the truth cannot possibly be destructive to religious faith which is of a genuinely high order. Any attempt on the part of religion to discourage the search for

truth in any realm of thought can only be based upon intellectual cowardice or stupidity. When religion turns cowardly, afraid to face the facts in any realm, religion signs her own death warrant. The wisdoms of modern science are quite new and are changing rapidly from decade to decade. The wisdom of religion is ancient, born out of thousands of years of the actual experience of the living of human life. The Christian faith should never seek to suppress but should always seek to encourage the discovery and dissemination of truth no matter from what realm it may come. After science has gone as far as it can it reaches an inevitable limit or borderland. Beyond scientific description and detailed analysis of material phenomena lie religion's intuitive insights into the moral and spiritual values and *meanings* lying back of and in and through all phenomena.

Science deals with material laws and natural forces which we, as living men, can master. Religion deals with great moral and spiritual ideals and convictions that ought to master us if our human life is to be nobly rational and morally strong. The values with which religion deals science cannot analyze in test tubes, nor measure with spectroscopes nor any other such thing. We are confronted with two entirely different aspects of reality. There are material things we can master. That is the realm in which science belongs. There are also moral and spiritual ideals and convictions, that ought to master us if our human life is to find any meaning or significance whatsoever for its existence. It is in this latter realm religion belongs. There is no conflict between real science and real religion.

The scientific spirit of free and open inquiry is here to stay. We cannot crush it out. We ought to be ashamed to try to crush it out. It is not our enemy. It can be made our ally in the whole process of human redemption. A religion which ties itself to beliefs which do violence to the scientific sanities of our day is a religion which is doomed in our modern world. Our religious beliefs must be expressed in thought-forms which

are not alien and repugnant to the modern spirit of truth. Science has revealed a universe of hitherto undreamed of magnitude. Science has also revealed, what our fathers did not know, the might and majesty of a universe of natural law. Any religion which does violence to this conception cannot command and will not receive the allegiance of informed and thoughtful minds.

Our modern life finds itself still haunted by the eternal quest of the human spirit for some satisfying answer to life's mystery and meaning. The human heart is still in need of the healing of its ancient hurts. We have not outgrown our need for a high and heroic faith which will sustain our human effort with convictions that give dignity and direction to our days, enabling us to live our life with beauty and nobility at its heart. The remarkable achievements of applied science in increasing our material comforts and luxuries have given rise to the delusion in our day that only that which is material and scientific is real and all else is false. Men have been so captivated with the idea of man's conquest of the material laws and forces by which he is surrounded that they have been led to think man's destiny upon the earth is to be worked out along that line and that line alone. They have forgotten man's hunger and need in the realm of the things of the spirit. So busied with the elements man can master they have been led largely to forget the things that ought to master men: those great moral and spiritual convictions and ideals which alone give sanity, decency and beauty to human life. Few words spoken by Jesus have more the ring of being spoken directly to our modern materialistic condition, "Man shall not live by bread alone." He never has and he never will. Our modern world needs to be saved from the delusion that the only real elements of life are the material things of life.

Modern science has profoundly changed another aspect of our world. It has made our planet exceedingly small. We cross the oceans today in less time than our fathers used to cross

some of our counties. News flashes from one end of the earth to the other in the same length of time it once took to travel only a few miles. The whole earth, with all the races upon it, is today a highly congested, relatively small and noisy neighborhood. This has placed an inter-racial and international strain upon our modern life, presenting us with problems of tremendous scope and far-reaching implications, of the seriousness and magnitude of which our fathers never dreamed.

Science has also revolutionized our whole social structure. Its technological knowledge and skills have created a social order with unprecedented social problems. The problem of economic justice is one of the major issues of our day. Upon the solution of that problem man's progression or retrogression upon the earth will be largely determined in the next comparatively few years. The rise of the democratic ideal in Europe which characterized the revolutionary clashes and ecstatic hopes of the past century has made, in many places, a complete cycle. One great European people after another has renounced the democratic ideal. Dictatorships have been set up born of sheer desperation of the people. It is openly proclaimed that representative government is at an end. Parliamentaryism has been tried and has been found to be a dismal failure. The people are not fit to govern themselves. Dependable, enlightened public opinion is held to be a sheer delusion and dangerously fallacious figment of the democratic imagination. To preserve the good and destroy the bad which was inherent in the old social order confronts us with one of the major issues of our time. Change is inevitable and no man can stay its hand which is moved by forces beyond our control. For years we have heard wild talk about the coming world revolution. The fact is the world revolution has already come. We are living in the midst of it now. In some areas this revolution is bloody and brutal. In most places it is bloodless, as yet. The threat that the whole world may once again be splashed with blood before the Thing has run its course is not so remote a possibility as to

be utterly out of the question. Modern science catapulted us into this new and strange world. It is a very different place from that in which our Protestant fathers lived when they wrote our creeds.

Modern science has also done this to us. In addition to blessing and cursing us with modern industrialism; with revelations of the immensity of the universe in which we live our apparently pygmy life amid what seems at times to be a Vast Indifference; in addition to blessing and cursing us by drawing all nations and races together into a relatively small, noisy and highly congested neighborhood in which it is easy for us to get on one another's nerves and have our national and racial jealousies and hatreds aroused—in addition to all these things, modern science has forged instruments of human slaughter with which she has endowed modern man with terrible potentialities. He now has the power ancient man never had. Modern science has committed into the hands of modern man the power to inflict irreparable injury upon himself.

These are some of the general outlines of the major issues of the real world in which we live. It is a world which confronts us with vast alternatives, magnificent and terrifying in its contradictory aspects. It is not the Protestant Christian Church alone which stands today at the crossroads of history scanning the pointing finger of Destiny; it is civilization itself. If ever the world needed to be saved it is today!

The balance of this book will be devoted to a condensed consideration of these major issues which this chapter has sought briefly to outline.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ISSUE OF BELIEF

#### MODERN HEDONISM

WESTERN civilization is apparently unaware of the fact that we are suffering everywhere from a threatened collapse of all religious faith. This statement applies not only to Protestants but to all religious groups. Statistics relative to the number of adherents of our institutions of religion will apparently contradict this statement. According to the statistics religious faith still has a tremendous hold upon us and its power over our civilization is increasing and not decreasing. No one will deny that religion still does exercise a vast influence, but we should be cautious about placing too much significance in statistics. Statistics previous to the French and Russian revolutions could no doubt have established the fact that the old order of things was in no danger of passing away. If we wish to understand the true tendencies of any epoch we must look beneath and beyond the surface appraisals yielded by statistical data however carefully compiled.

The spirit of our age is thus depicted by a keen observer :

“On the English side Aldous Huxley is characteristic of the present decadence in contrast to the moral fiber and evolutionary hope of his Victorian forbear, Thomas Huxley. His ‘Brave New World’\* is terrifying and devastating as it depicts his vision of our materialistic future. Human life is conveniently bred in the test-tubes and beakers of laboratories, as in incubators, and it is scientifically conditioned and moulded at will. Life is ‘nasty,

\*Published by Doubleday-Doran, and quoted by permission.

brutish and short,' lived in a moral cesspool that has long passed beyond all distinctions of good and evil. Men swear 'by our Ford' or 'in the year of our Ford.' However amusing, or contemptuous, or cynical such writing may be, it offers no possible philosophy for creative achievement or high living for youth. It is decadent.

"The spirit of the age is characteristically expressed in an American Volume of 'Living Philosophies' which contains the intimate credos of more than a score of writers on both sides of the Atlantic.\* In one of the opening essays John Dewey says: 'The chief intellectual characteristic of the present age is its despair of any constructive philosophy—not just in its technical meaning, but in the sense of any integrated outlook and attitude. . . . The result is disillusionment.'

"Theodore Dreiser writes: 'I find life to be a complete illusion or mirage . . . in the wholly inexplicable world. . . . The best I can say is that I have not the faintest notion of what it is all about, unless it is for self-satisfaction. . . . I catch no meaning from all I have seen, and pass quite as I came, confused and dismayed.' Irving Babbitt says: 'Unless there is a reaffirmation of the truths of the inner life in some form—religious or humanistic—civilization is threatened at its base.' James Truslow Adams writes: 'We are now floundering in a morass. . . . The present situation cries aloud for some code. . . . We are bewildered.'

"George Jean Nathan takes a position that would be regarded with contempt in Russia when he says: 'In hedonism I believe above all other beliefs. To me pleasure and my own personal happiness—only infrequently collaborating with that of others—are all I deem worth a hoot. . . . I have all I can do to look out for my own happiness and welfare.' Mr. H. L. Mencken states his credo of cynicism and Mr. Bertrand Russell writes again as formerly on 'the firm foundation of unyielding de-

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\**Living Philosophies*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1931. A series of intimate credos by Albert Einstein, Sir James Jeans, Theodore Dreiser, James Truslow Adams, Sir Arthur Keith, Beatrice Webb, Fridtjof Nansen, R. A. Millikan, Hilaire Belloc, George Jean Nathan, Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, H. G. Wells, H. L. Mencken, Julia Peterkin, Irving Babbitt, Joseph Wood Krutch, Lewis Mumford, Hu Shih, J. B. S. Haldane, Irwin Edman, and Dean Inge. Quoted by permission.



spair. . . . Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark.' It is, however, Joseph Wood Krutch in his credo and more fully in his 'Modern Temper'\* who is typical of our decadent modern philosophy and of its results. He writes: 'If one turns to the smarter of these novelists—Mr. Aldous Huxley, Mr. Ernest Hemingway—one will discover in their tragic farces the picture of a society which is at bottom in despair because . . . it has lost the sense of any ultimate importance inherent in the experience which preoccupies it. . . . To Huxley and Hemingway love is at times only a sort of obscene joke . . . debaucheries born of nothing except a sense of the emptiness of life . . . in this generally devaluated world.' Mr. Krutch further says: 'A color has faded from our palette, a whole range of effects has dropped out of our symphony. . . . We are carried one step nearer to that state in which existence is seen as a vast emptiness. . . . We have grown used to a Godless universe, but we are not yet accustomed to one which is loveless as well, and only when we have so become shall we realize what atheism really means.' "†

We cannot ignore the fact that we are living in a period in which there has been a marked lowering of moral standards and the threat seems at times to be present that all noble idealism is passing from us. To be sure, there have been many such periods of moral decadence in the past, and it may be pointed out that our humanity somehow manages to recover its moral sense, and periods of indecency are followed by periods of moral sanity and balance. A man may suffer from many minor indispositions over a long period of years, from all of which he always recovers his exuberant health. But, it may also be pointed out that as with a man, so with a racial strain and culture there does come a final sickness which is a sickness unto death. There was a moral sickness and decadence which came

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\**The Modern Temper*, by Krutch, is published by Harcourt, Brace and Co., and is quoted by permission.

†*Russia Today*, Sherwood Eddy, pp. 180-182. Published by Farrar & Rinehart and quoted by permission.

upon ancient cultures from which they never recovered. Are we witnessing the beginnings of such a period in Western civilization? This question will appear serious to some—it will strike others as being exceedingly funny.

I recall the hoarse and hollow laughter of a man I once visited in a hospital who was slowly dying of some subtle disease and who made cynically merry with the doctor's instructions and who insisted with cock-sureness that he never felt better in his life and he would be up and out in a few days. He never recovered. His illness was a slow, subtle, lingering affair which took a long time to consume his vitality and take his life. The final sickness of racial strains and cultures is generally like that—a long slow curve which drops gradually down and down over a span of years in which several centuries are sometimes embraced.

All ages have had their dire predictors. Few things are more uproariously humorous than the reading of a carefully selected assortment of the utterances of the prophets of gloom of all ages, who assayed to assure their generation it was going rapidly "to the dogs." I have in my files an interesting assortment of these dirges of the calamity howlers of many ages. The collection begins with such utterances made in ancient Babylon, Assyria and Egypt and comes on up through Victorian England and pre-Civil-War America. After making due allowance for the boisterous humor which is afforded one in the reading of these frequently extravagant predictions of dire disaster it remains true, nevertheless, that racial strains and cultures have collapsed. That is fact and not gloomy theory. A final sickness has come upon them from which they never recovered. And always it has been a slow lingering illness.

In the pages which immediately follow, the reader may very likely receive the impression that he is reading the thoughts of an alarmist guilty of expressing himself in so extravagant a manner that no weight should be attached to his words. As I see it, however, we are in a far more serious situation than we

realize, and what I see I shall attempt faithfully to portray. An attitude of decadent cynicism is making inroads upon our vitality more rapidly than our apostles of optimistic nonchalance are willing to admit. I am fully convinced there is a vast amount of goodness and greatness still alive in the modern world. These things I would not minimize and wish indeed to magnify, but it cannot be too strongly insisted that forces of moral disintegration are rapidly gaining power over us.

We have allowed the cynics to talk us out of our ideals. We have allowed the lowest elements in our life, in modern movies, plays and novels to put a dirty smear across our minds, degrading and corrupting our manners and our morals and to convince us that all men are at heart vicious and cheap and that life itself is a tawdry thing. We have forgotten that satire and cynicism are a sign not of the vigor of a race nor of a culture, but that these things are signs of racial decadence.

We have a new vocabulary with which we express our contempt for idealism wherever it may dare to show its head. Many among our book reviewers, magazine and novel writers, playwrights and movie producers call all such things "hooey," the "raspberries," the "baloney," and our morons have surrendered themselves to the truth and wisdom of their words. They have convinced many of us that life itself is a laughably ridiculous thing of low comedy and vile motives. The fashion among many of our writers of biography is to prowling around our graveyards where men of our past, whom we used to think were great men worthy of our respect and emulation, are dug up from their graves and held up to our cynical scorn through a process of clever writing which is known as debunking by our great debunkers. Our daily press features crime news above all other news and so feeds into the minds of millions of our people a daily mental diet of the most sordid side of life in which our criminals are given a sensational front-page write-up with many pictures of their various poses and a detailed account of what they eat for breakfast, the cut of their clothes,

their preferences in neckties or toothpaste, their wise-cracking observations—the upshot of all of which is that our criminals become in the minds of millions our most publicized heroes whose ways thousands are, of course, tempted to emulate that they too may enjoy the spotlight of public recognition. The American people have been given recently a far more thorough education in the ways of such types as Al Capone or John Dillinger than in the ways of Abraham Lincoln and, inevitably, Capone or Dillinger has become for thousands a more admired pattern of life than the Lincoln pattern. No sensible person wishes, in any manner, to curtail the freedom of the press. This issue does not involve the freedom of the press, but it has to do with the prostitution of the press to ends which disgrace it and degrade others.

The moving-picture industry has placed in our hands one of the most marvelous implements in the history of the world, an instrument endowed with unlimited artistic, educational and histrionic possibilities. If this industry were consistently directed toward worthy ends it could exercise an ennobling influence of incalculable magnitude. There has been a notable improvement in American screen productions during the past twelve months on account of the stand taken by the League for Decency, which was inaugurated by the Roman Catholic Church and which has also enlisted the co-operation of other religious groups. The League for Decency has effected movie box-office receipts and this has changed the policy of the industry in the last year. There is small evidence, however, of a change of heart in the dominantly controlling elements of the industry itself. The religious forces of this nation would be childishly gullible if they thought otherwise. Previous experiences have taught them that reforms within the industry itself are insincere, brief and clever evasions whose influence for good soon passes. In writing of the general run of screen productions one is justified in viewing the matter, not as it appears during this recent League-for-Decency period of ap-

parent penitence, but over a range of the past ten years. We have no assurance that the tendencies which have characterized the movies in the past decade will not also dominate them in the future. An appraisal of the influence of the motion-picture screen during the last decade is bound to be severely critical if made from the viewpoint of those who value decency.

The average attendance upon our American movies is between fifty million and seventy million patrons a week whose minds have been frequently fed with an interpretation of life which—with great artistic ability and subtle appeal—has pictured us human beings as more like a lot of dogs running the streets, with dog appetites, stimulations, excitements and satisfactions, than like anything else—convincing millions among us that that after all is really what life is all about. The average modern play on our legitimate stage and the average most popular modern novel have given the same general interpretation of life. This is, I know, ugly writing, but these are ugly facts.\* I perhaps should add, that I may not be judged as an impossible prude, no one enjoys a good play more than I, or has a greater respect for the men and women of real talent and worthy motives who devote their abilities to this, one of the oldest and noblest arts known to man. It is an art capable of bringing to our life today, as it has brought frequently in the past, a great exaltation of the human spirit. I have no desire to dramatize our life in the patterns and molds of interpretations which make dumb sissies out of our men or pale and pietistic nuns out of our women. But I do not think we can go for our themes for our novels and plays to the sewers of our civilization, or empty our garbage cans in the living room of our thought, and not expect these things to put an ugly scar upon our minds which is bound to leave a degrading smear

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\*I write here not of some recent productions, which have been magnificent, but of the general tendencies of the past decade. As with the movies, one does not know whether or not a real change has come and come to stay. There have been previous brief episodes of dignity and fineness, during the past ten years, which soon faded.

over our whole evaluation of life. We cannot permit ourselves to treat and defile life in this way and then be disappointed with life if it turns sordid and ashes in our hands. If we have no higher estimation of ourselves we need never expect a strong and beautiful expression of life to characterize our civilization. This issue does not involve a struggle between petty piety or religious long-facedness wishing to suppress the lilt and laughter of life's exuberant fun and clean dramatic gaiety. It is not an issue of realism versus an impossible sentimental romanticism, but it has to do with a deliberate distortion of truth in a manner which enormously over-emphasizes the dirtiest phases of certain grossly abnormal aspects of life—and does it solely for filthy purposes. It is not that true integrity of art which holds a mirror up to reality and faithfully depicts all the facts. It is an issue of plain decency versus vicious indecency which is subtly destroying, on a wide scale, our estimations of life's most fundamental sanctities. When a people lose their respect and reverence for life's ennobling ideals they lose their motives and their powers for creating and sustaining a strong expression of civilized life. These same things have put more than one great people of the past upon the garbage pile of the dead and decadent things of human history. The still surviving greatness and goodness of the American people are facts of significant assurance and enormous potentiality, but these cynical and corrupting tendencies are also facts which cannot be nonchalantly ignored. Turn where we will and look straight at the modern scene, and, if one refuses to blink the facts, it is far from reassuring. One does not need to be a fanatical alarmist to see that it is true that there has been a serious breakdown of ancient moral sanctions and fundamental decencies. These immoral and destructive tendencies have, of course, always been present among all races and cultures. But when these things become as openly accepted and publicly flaunted in our faces as they have been in recent years it is time for those who still have reverence for

life to do a bit of serious thinking. A people cannot permit a dirty smear and degrading cynicism to be put upon their life, in so wide-spread and deliberate a manner, and not expect some rather serious consequences. Life cannot be treated that way without taking its own destructive revenge upon itself.

What is the fundamental cause of all this? There are many causes, none more basic than the wide-spread loss of religious faith. More of our people than we realize have no exalting convictions about life and about God which bring a moral restraint and dedication into their life. This statement is applicable not only to America but to the whole of Western civilization. The issue of religious belief is the foremost issue of our times. Unless there be a revival of high religious faith among us modernity will not find healing for the disease that has eaten deep into its bones.

Some may feel such a statement is an exaggeration, that religious faith is not the greatest issue of our day, but that such problems as economic justice and war are far more real and to the speedy solution of these practical issues we should give primary place. Such reasoning is fallacious and belongs to a general bewilderment which has afflicted the modern mind and which is more responsible than anything else for the confusion which entangles the thinking of modernity. We need not expect a sane solution to our practical world problems unless the modern world be undergirded in its thought with some sort of belief which holds that there is some sense and meaning inherent within reality and that our human life is not a "tale told by an idiot with much sound and fury signifying nothing."

We will never release the human energies, enthusiasms and heroic determinations necessary to build a modern world of sanity and decency unless modernity becomes endowed in some manner with some sort of notion as to what life itself is really all about which will be big and challenging enough to evoke from among us a sufficient number of men and women of moral integrity and noble idealism to lead us out of the be-

wildering confusion in which the modern world now finds itself. If we are all just a lot of bugs crawling around for a few days until a Blind Mechanism puts its inevitable foot upon us and pulps us up—if we are nothing, that came from nothing, that means nothing, and is moving toward nothing—we shall not be inclined to bother ourselves seriously over—nothing. It is impossible for us to escape this question of belief, some sort of belief as to what is back of the universe, this place of immensity and mystery in which we live, and some sort of belief as to who we are or what we are and what our human life, after all, is all about. The cynics and the wise-crackers may think religious faith is a matter of anthropomorphic primitive superstition or dreamy wishful thinking. It is not. Religious faith deals with questions which lie at the very heart of life and from that fact there is no escape. As we find answer to these questions so we build and live our life and what we think or believe in our hearts we are, and this is inevitably reflected and expressed in the social structures we fashion out of the efforts of our hands. One may have many different kinds of belief. One may believe in nothing—nothing at all. If you can persuade a sufficient number of people to believe in nothing, you are bound in time to produce a world order that will be committed to nothing and will tend more and more to mean nothing. If you can persuade a sufficient number of people to believe in something noble and beautiful, tremendous in its implications and application, you are bound in time to produce a world order that will resemble the nobility and beauty of that belief.

Some may object that the point here is overdrawn. One may think a belief in progress, or culture or humanitarian idealism is all that is necessary to sustain our human life with a sufficient incentive to produce greatness and goodness in our ethical conduct and our social structures. Whoever thinks that is a shallow thinker thinking only along the rim of the thin surface elements of life's veneered coating. Always, there are deeper



questions than those which life asks concerning itself and for which it requires some satisfactory answer that reaches and touches life, not merely upon the level of its jaunty, surface sophistications but at its depths. The issue of belief is the primary question of our age. Only an illuminating revival of great religious faith can bring healing to the hurts and sanity and sustaining power to the life of modern man.

#### PERSONALITY IS THE CLUE

Modern Christianity stands today surer than ever of the fundamental truth of her ancient faith, and the conviction is strong within us that this faith is based upon a revealed Wisdom that is above and beyond man. In the revelation of moral monotheism found in the Old Testament and of redemptive Love found in the New Testament we still find the Word of God to man. In the original religion of Jesus we still find a revelation of truth adequate to compose and redeem the confused spirit of our times. But we ought to know these great convictions cannot be convincingly expressed if we rely solely on outworn dogma. The issue of religious belief, so far as Christianity is concerned, involves far more than a mere adjustment between liberal and fundamentalist viewpoints. Our basic convictions must be expressed in a manner that will convince modern intellectual skepticism that its difficulties have been honestly faced. We must meet on their own grounds those millions among us who have been alienated from the Christian Church and faith of their fathers, and whose thinking has been captivated by atheistic or agnostic philosophies of life. We who are still loyal to the supreme revelation of life and God in Christ, who still find in Him the rational foundations for the faith that is in us, must learn to express these convictions in a manner which will challenge the wide-spread intellectual doubt and confusion of our age. The following paragraphs are written with that end in mind and will be

devoted to a suggestive and by no means exhaustive treatment of the magnitude of the problem involved.

We who still hold the Christian faith know the arguments of bitter atheism and the timid cautions of agnosticism afraid to commit itself to the Great Adventure for fear it may be giving itself to heroic dedications toward which the universe may be indifferent. We believe life was meant to be an enterprise of heroic love and that it cannot be turned nor twisted nor made into anything else. We know quite as well as agnosticism that there is so much that is unknown and unknowable to us. To believe or not to believe, is an ancient question with which we are as fully acquainted as is the timid caution and careful reticence of agnosticism.

We also know, quite as well as bitter atheism does, there are many elements, at times overpowering in their insistence, which make the universe appear to be a cruel and ghastly thing of blind mechanistic horror. All these things we know and have squarely faced. But we also know we are very small and the universe is very great and from end to end it strikes us as being an expression of illimitable mystery and majesty. To believe the whole vast thing came from nothing, means nothing and is moving toward nothing, is, to our minds, to surrender to the latest and most stupid form of belief in magic that has ever afflicted our human ignorance. To believe that blind mechanism, without plan or rhyme or reason, accidentally jostled itself together in such a way as to produce stupendous symmetry and order, out from all of which so delicately organized a thing as conscious life emerged, reaching its highest expression in human personality with its creative artistic abilities and spiritual appreciations and its capacity for heroic moral dedications—to believe that all of this is but the accidental result of matter going it blind, is to believe in magic of the crudest and crassest kind.

We believe the universe has some great purpose in it, some sense to it, some meaning in it. It is not our conception that

it is the primary business of religion to explain the universe. The universe is inexplicable, utterly beyond the explanatory powers of the human intellect. The theologians of the Middle Ages thought otherwise. If one wishes to grasp their thinking, expressed in a most vivid manner, one cannot do better than read Dante's *Divine Comedy*. His "Purgatorio," "Inferno" and "Paradisio" are magnificent poetry but exceedingly crude theology which claimed to know too much about the mysteries of earth, of heaven and of hell. No enlightened modern mind can take seriously, even in a metaphorical sense, Dante's celestial and infernal theological geography.

Religion in its primitive forms is dogmatic in its insistence that it has a complete explanation—a sort of blue-print set of plans and specifications—for all the insoluble riddles of the universe. Religion in its mature forms knows better than that, knows indeed that we are faced on every side with impenetrable mysteries. In the grip of many things which sometime shake and break the human heart, we ask "Why?" in vain. On so many matters mature religious faith answers, "We do not know; there are many things we cannot reconcile nor explain." Who can explain a universe in which the cruel death of a little child is possible? Intelligent religious faith does not say, "I explain," but, "I hope, I trust, I believe," and when faith that is based on reason deepens into faith that is based on the abiding realities of spiritual experience, the mature religious man says, "I know—I know that God is and God is Good though I realize there is much I cannot explain."

The more we know the more clearly we realize that the universe is utterly beyond our explanatory powers. This is true not only of men of deep religious faith but it is true also of men of science concerned primarily with an explanation of the material aspects of reality. The materialistic philosophy which characterized the scientific hypotheses of the past generation has been displaced by an entirely different outlook. Leading men of modern science, physicists and astronomers like Ed-

dington and Sir James Jeans, are saying that no scientists today are materialists. They now know too much about matter to be materialists. Matter and mechanism have been reduced to energy and the nature of the ultimate vital stuff of which energy is composed defies the explanations of modern science.

Sir James Jeans says the universe appears to be an expression of a mysterious something that is like a vast thought. This is a far cry from the materialism of Haeckel and other such men of a generation ago. Modern science has gone far in its description of the manifestations of material phenomena, its discovery through the spectroscope of the chemical elements of which the farthest stars are compounded, its measuring of infinite space by light-years, its devising of elaborated mathematical equations by which natural laws are stated; but no reputable modern scientist claims that we are now able or ever shall be able completely to explain the illimitable universe which is our awe-inspiring home.

The modern man of science and the modern man of faith face the same impenetrable mystery. Both stand in the presence of vastness, solitude and deep night which no science or religion can completely explain. But both the man of science and the man of faith are justified in believing the mysterious universe has some profound purpose which is of tremendous significance to the life of man—the strange little creature whose eyes are lifted in awe and wonder toward the vastness and the mystery which has produced him and endowed him with dreams that will not die.\*

The function of religion is not to explain the world, but to sustain men with a faith by which they can meet life with courage and rise above anything and everything that tends to degrade and defeat the human spirit. Faith that is deeper than knowledge is the faith by which men overcome the world and

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\*See *The Nature of the Physical World and Science and the Unseen World*, etc., by Arthur Stanley Eddington, F. R. S., Professor of Astronomy, University of Cambridge. See also *The Universe Around Us* and *The Mysterious Universe*, by Sir James Jeans, M. A., D. Sc., LL. D., F. R. S.

there is no other way. We cannot overcome the world in a material sense. It is too big for us and we are too small. It can crush us, drown us, burn us, and as far as the material aspects of our being are concerned the hand of decadence and death is upon us all and our bodies are destined to annihilation, "like snow upon the desert's dusty face lighting a little hour or two—is gone." We can only overcome the world in a moral and spiritual sense, and, in that sense, one of two things happens to all of us. We either overcome the world or it overcomes us, destroying our ideals, embittering our lives, crushing our spiritual hopes and corrupting our moral capacities. We follow the light of moral mind or else we lose our way, wander aimlessly and are lost in darkness.

It is the task of religious faith to give to men a vision of truth so compelling in its heroic greatness and so appealing in its haunting beauty that they will rise up instinctively and follow it, forsaking all else, knowing that if they are spirit-led they walk aright and have nothing to fear. And so shall they be enabled to face life and meet death with courage and heroism in their hearts. This is the life which is life indeed. To find this is to find what all men seek and One has called the "Pearl of Great Price." The supreme value and truth of religious faith is found in life itself, in the manner in which we are enabled, by virtue of the faith that is in us, to live victoriously and beautifully. We do not believe such a way of living can be permanently sustained in the life of man unless he finds—God. In the revelation of life and God found in Christ we still find the only sane solution we know to the riddle of our existence. If man's life is to be saved from frustration and futility he must surrender his life absolutely into the hands of God, the Eternal Goodness, and dedicate his life to the complete emancipation of his fellows. Only faith in some dependable Purpose that is greater than any man and worthy of all men can compose and empower and save the soul of modern man.

The physical immensity of the universe does not disturb us. We do not feel lonely or lost amid its vastness. We know we cannot explain life or the universe. We know there are insoluble riddles and inexplicable contradictions surrounding our life. But we do believe it is rational for us to take personality as the key to the meaning of it all. We believe it is irrational to attempt to find the *clue* to the ultimate meaning of reality in rocks, fossils, stars, steam or electricity or any other such thing. Personality is a fact in the mysterious universe in which we live. We, as human beings, are facts. We came out of the universe. We are part of it. We are not alien to it. It has produced us. Something of what is in it is in us. Something of what is in us is in it. When we look into the depths of the mystery of personality we are not looking at the universe from the outside but from the inside. Something of what it is we are. Something of what we are it is. We belong to it. We came out of it. It produced us.

Is it not irrational to seek the clue to the meaning of life in a study devoted entirely to the ways of rocks, stars, fossils and the behavior of steam, gas, electricity and other such things and to overlook entirely so tremendously suggestive and significant a fact as the existence of personality? If we are convinced of the sanity of taking personality as the most significant clue available to us for the understanding of the Great Mystery, certainly no one can deny the reasonableness of our insistence that we focus our thought upon the Greatest Personality who has ever walked this earth. It is irrational and impossible for us to believe life came from nothing, means nothing, and is moving toward nothing—in a universe whose forces have actually produced a life and character like that of the Jesus of history. He is our clue to the meaning of life. For us it would be irrational to believe in nothing with the fact of such a life as that of Jesus staring us in the face. He belongs to actual history and that fact no rational man can ignore.

In a universe, beyond our powers to comprehend, personality is the most significant, known expression of the mysterious energy and meaning back of the universe. The Highest Personality we know is the most dependable key and clue to the meaning of it all. Such reasoning is not irrational. George Matheson once said, "Son of Man whenever I doubt of life I think of Thee." Lincoln once said, "No man ever got lost on a straight road." Christ, to many of us, is the straightest road we know into the heart of the Great Mystery.

"That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,  
Or decomposes but to recompose,  
Become my Universe that feels and knows."

Life is a choice. Men may choose to surrender life's magnificence to the paralyzing convictions of atheism or the bewildering uncertainties of agnosticism. But such a belief is not rational, nor is it calculated to put peace and power at the heart of our modern life. It is a belief that bows down before the creed of life's Negation. We do not choose to follow such a creed. We choose to follow Christ. The conviction is upon us that in following Him we are not on the wrong track but we are on the right track, we are following the right clue to the ultimate meaning of life and of God. This faith to us is not a matter of ignorant superstitious credulity. It is a matter of glad and courageous dedication to the Highest and the Best we know. We have faith in life and in God. That faith is grounded in Christ.

"Through such souls alone, God  
Stooping, shows sufficient of His Light  
For us, in the Dark to rise by. And we rise. . . ."

Nobility and beauty of personality afford the best light vouchsafed to man by which to make our way amid so much that is dark and confusing. Human personality has done too

many heroic and beautiful things—human personality is endowed with too many strange hungers and noble aspirations—for us to ignore its impressively suggestive significance. And of all the light shed upon the mystery of our existence through the lives of noble men who have lived upon our earth—one Life stands out supreme! He, to us, is Life. He, to us, is Reality—the Way, the Truth and the Life.\* We believe whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness but shall have the Light of Life. This is our Christian faith. It is a noble faith with malice toward none and with charity and love for all.

The doctrine of the incarnation—not as an unreasonable dogma but as an intelligible conviction founded on historic fact and supported by rational processes of thought—still stands as the foundation of our faith. *In the character of Christ we find the supreme revelation of what the character of God is like and the character of man should become like.* Beyond that words cannot go. That simple statement expresses the highest conception of God and the loftiest ideal for human life known to man. There in few words (in italics above) is a tremendous creedal statement which embraces all of the great convictions and commitments of the Christian faith. If the modern Christian Church will lay hold upon this fundamental conviction of her faith and will give great and rational emphasis to its whole meaning, she can meet the issue of religious faith of our day. But the challenge of our time does not stop with matters of belief, however basic they may be. Belief must issue in life. This moves our thinking forward from the question of belief to vast issues which call for action.

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\*John 14:6.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ISSUE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

#### THREE SYSTEMS CLASH

THE Christian Church has a duty to perform in the present industrial crisis. She touches the lives and can influence the thought and action of millions of people. We face a new day which calls for a new deal in our economic order. The term "new deal" will awaken violent prejudices in some minds until we hasten to explain that the term is not used in any partisan political sense whatsoever. We refer to inescapable forces that are sweeping across our world demanding inevitable changes in our social structures.

At the outset of a discussion of the problem of social justice it is wholesomely intelligent to recognize one's ignorance in the presence of its infinite complexity. We are confronted with one of those rare epochs in history of profound change. No living man comprehends the situation in its entirety. The more one knows the more one realizes how little one knows. This does not imply a surrender to economic agnosticism, but it does suggest to all students of the problem the wisdom of intellectual humility. No living brain, be it that of a practical financier or industrialist, teacher of economics or teacher of religion, can completely compass this issue and neatly point the easy way out. A few fundamental principles ought to be clear, but even these are set within a matrix whose extended margins are filled with many contradictory elements that are not, as yet, altogether clear to anyone. In this, as in many other subjects, anyone who is too cock-sure and claims to know too

much should not be trusted. The problem is too big for that type of mind.

Something profoundly revolutionary has happened and if we do not grasp the significance of it we shall never understand the basic economic fact which underlies and has caused much of the present chaotic condition of our social order. Until about one hundred years ago the power upon which civilized life was based in its economic activities was almost entirely the muscle power of men and animals. Today there are single power-plants in America capable of generating more power than Egypt, Greece, Babylon, Rome or medieval Europe ever had. The harnessing of power and mechanization of industrial processes have created a new world. No greater change has ever occurred to any civilization. This vast revolutionary influence has been coming upon us for nearly one hundred years. It has come with acute acceleration in the past thirty years.

Our amazingly efficient machine-age productivity marks our era as entirely different from all previous epochs of history. We face a fundamental problem for whose complete solution there is no precedent. Our situation in its basic aspects is unprecedented. What has happened staggers the imagination and makes the thoughtful student of history gasp as he thinks of what may yet be coming in man's increasing abilities to harness and control the material powers of his earthly domain. The engineer with his rapidly progressing technical knowledge and skill has produced a social order with unprecedented social problems. There have been previous economic catastrophes in which human misery perhaps exceeded anything known in our times. The terrible decimation wrought upon the continent of Europe by the Hundred Years' War is a case in point. But no former economic upheaval has ever affected the entire world. Our situation today has no parallel. An economic depression of the greatest magnitude the world has ever known accompanies the greatest abundance of material wealth the world has ever possessed.

A profoundly significant epoch in human history has very definitely come to an end. A new era is beginning. We are too close to it fully to understand it. We have passed from an economy of scarcity to an economy of abundance and as yet we do not know what to do about it. We have the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty, of the deliberate destruction and curtailment of agricultural and industrial productive capacities in the presence of acute human need. In all previous epochs of history the plea for a more abundant economic life for all men was met with the stubborn fact that poverty was inevitable for many because there simply was not enough to go around. Today there is enough for all to live in decent comfort and security. The harnessing of power, the researches of science in the field of production, and the amazing mechanization of industry have placed undreamed of productive capacities in the hands of modern man, ushering him into a world of plenty which is altogether different from any similar situation he has faced in any previous epoch. The situation confronting us is not at all analogous to the transition through which cobblers and blacksmiths passed when shoes and plows began to be fabricated in factories. The problem is far more profound than that.

There are three outstanding politico-economic systems on the world's horizon. These three systems are bound in time to compete for world mastery in the field and function of economics. These three politico-economic systems are, Communism, Fascism and Democratic-Capitalism.

Middleton Murry has said that Communism is the only living religion on earth commanding the passionate loyalty of living men with a definite plan and program for the bringing of a more abundant life to the masses of humanity. Communism is, of course, a purely secular movement but with all its violent use of compulsion, its denial of individual freedom, it is yet endowed with a humanitarian passion for social justice which is closely akin to the motivations of religion and which

the forces of idealism of other politico-economic systems cannot overlook. The brutalities of Communism are repulsive to many of us to whom it seems a new tyranny has been substituted for an old one. We see no great emancipating promise in Communism.

But, whether we approve or disapprove of Communism, we shall have to face it. It is a fact in the real world in which we live and very likely as time goes on it will become an increasing and not a decreasing fact. Our capitalistic convictions must not blind our eyes to facts, however unpleasant they may be for us to face. Communism has maintained itself for seventeen years in the life of a great people. It controls the destiny of one hundred and sixty-five million human beings who compose a considerable segment of the human race. The severest critics of Communism are forced to admit there are no signs of its abatement in Russia. On the contrary it grows stronger. The government of capitalistic America has recently recognized the Communistic Government of Russia. Recognition does not mean approval.

Russian Communism as it now functions is frank in saying it is not a system of complete social justice for all classes. It claims economic justice for all classes is impossible. The apologetic of Russian Communism claims injustice is inevitable so long as society is divided into classes, those who own and control the tools of production and those who do not, the "haves" and the "have-nots." The claim is made that under capitalism the owning class, representing a small percentage of the total population, oppress and exploit the masses. The question of social justice becomes a matter of relative justice. By dispossessing the upper classes and ruthlessly crushing them out, injustice is done to only a small percentage of the population in order that the overwhelming majority—the proletariat—may secure justice.

It is better, so Communism says, that ninety to ninety-five per cent of the population should have justice, even though

that means ruthless extermination of the former five to ten per cent upper class, than to permit the continuance of this upper class with its power, under capitalism, to inflict gross injustice upon the overwhelming majority. The dictatorship of the proletariat means frankly class justice, not justice for all. Justice for all will never come, so Communism claims, until society is classless, all men are economically equal in a social order in which the upper class has been forever destroyed. To the ruthless extermination of the upper classes Russia is addressing her merciless energies, but Communism claims that even in this transition stage, looking at the problem of social justice from the viewpoint of the good of the social whole, there is even now in Russia less injustice than under the capitalistic system. And in time, when there shall be no upper nor lower classes, justice for all will be realized. As long as humanity is divided into classes—competitive groups: the class owners and mass workers—there is bound to be class war and injustice. Only by seizing the power capitalism places in the hands of the upper classes through their ownership of the tools of production and their manipulation of credit and finance for their own selfish ends; only by exterminating this upper class and socializing the wealth and means of production for the good of all the people will social justice ever be attained. So says Communism.

Under Communism the State becomes a vast economic monopoly which attempts a theoretically perfect productive efficiency in a social order in which the waste of all competition is eliminated. Communism believes a social structure which permits economic competition is stupid and inefficient. It is like a factory which allows each of its machines and departments to produce in a helter-skelter manner with no intelligent plan or co-ordination regarding the total objective of the productive forces of the factory functioning as an integrated whole. Capitalism will not permit a factory to operate in such a stupidly inefficient manner. Communism

claims the same carefully planned efficient integration of a single factory must be extended to embrace *all the wealth and means of production of the social whole*.

Communism goes further than that. Not only must production be planned by the State, but *distribution* must also be under an absolutely dictatorial State control. Communism claims this is the *only* just and intelligent way in which man's economic activities will ever be freed from recurring cycles of over-production. Panics, bankruptcy and financial collapse are the unavoidable accompaniment and curse of capitalism. In time it will destroy itself through its unintelligent lack of social planning and its cutthroat competition. These destructive forces rest on the fundamental selfishness and injustice of a social order divided into classes. The good of the social whole is not the main objective of such an industrial order. It is based upon the exploitation and oppression of the masses by the upper classes who own and control the credit, financial facilities and tools of industrial production which they use primarily for their own selfish ends. Such a system carries the seeds of certain death within itself. It is bound to commit suicide. Communism claims to be the only system which can save the modern world from ever-recurring cycles of economic chaos born of class greed and injustice and blind to the necessity of social planning.

Communism is committed to an interpretation of history which claims that economic determinism is *the* force that molds men and their civilizations—even our morals and our religion. For example: the New England States finding slavery economically unprofitable came in time to take the moral and religious view that slavery was wrong, whereas our Southern States finding slavery economically profitable defended it in our Christian Churches as a divinely ordained institution. Communism claims, true to the teachings of its Messiah, Karl Marx, that economic forces are *the* forces that mold man's life upon the earth. From its viewpoint all

history is looked upon as a struggle for *economic* freedom and equality among men.

In this struggle several progressive stages have already been passed through. All ancient civilizations were based upon the institution of human slavery. Ancient slavery passed over into the slavery of serfdom in feudal Europe. Serfdom passed over into the wage-slavery of our modern capitalistic factory-system social order. Thus from the dawn of history the upper classes have held the masses in the cruel grip of some form of slavery. Humanity's struggle for freedom is outlined in somewhat the following manner in which the mile-posts of human emancipation are enumerated: first, the freeing of the slaves of antiquity; second, the freeing of the mind of man from priestly dominance and fear born of religious superstition; third, the theoretical (though not real) freedom and equality of all men before the law; fourth, the theoretical (though not real) freedom and equality of all men in their political rights. But all these freedoms and equalities are looked upon as empty farces until man attains the only *real* freedom which is *economic freedom and equality*.

This, so Communism claims, is the manifest destiny of our modern era throughout the world. Man at last, under worldwide Communism, is to attain economic freedom and equality in the violent revolutionary realization that all other equalities and freedoms are empty futilities disguised by hollow, hypocritical phrases. Man, whose life across the ages has been bathed in the bloody strife of war, degraded by the brutality and injustices of cruel social systems, will at last stand erect and free upon the earth because he will have attained a classless social order in which man's inhumanity to man will be no more because all men will be *economically free and equal*. According to Communistic philosophy there is only one real redemption. Not until all men are economically free and equal will humanity be what it ought to be. This is Communism's gospel of redemption in which human salvation is

to come through economics. With all of which many of us do not agree, but a debate with Communism is not the objective of these pages. We are merely attempting to set forth a few of the main aspects of Communism that we may better understand what it is and why it is. Communism is a colossal fact we ought more clearly to understand. No matter what we may think of it, it is a fact with which our modern world will be forced to reckon—if not today, certainly tomorrow.

Fascism is a politico-economic system which, in a way, is Communism turned upside down. In Communism the masses, through an absolute dictatorship, are on top. In Fascism, the upper bourgeois classes, through an absolute dictatorship, are on top. Communism is anti-religious. Fascism, whether under Mussolini in Italy or Hitler in Germany, is pro-religious. The tendency in both of these Fascist systems is, of course, to use religion primarily for purely nationalistic ends. Religion is regarded more as a secular than as a spiritual force. It is thought of as a means to an end greater than itself—the purely secular, nationalistic ends of the State. The tendency is to render all things to Cæsar that the totalitarian State as a purely secular force may be supreme.

In saying these things we must not be too critical of the problems of other peoples who have suffered provocations and face difficulties we have been spared. Of course, in a broad sense, every social system tends to make a religion of itself and to regard as blasphemous criticisms of its basic tenets. Fascism under Mussolini in Italy has done constructive things for Italy. Fascism under Hitler's Naziism may do constructive things for Germany. Fascism appears more deeply entrenched in Italy than in Germany. The German experiment with Fascism is as yet too new and untried to base predictions upon its ultimate outcome.

No one who has traveled recently in these two great modern states can fail to be impressed with both the dangers and the possibilities of the Fascist state. Fascism achieves a mag-



nificent efficiency but always at the price of human liberty. Wherever Fascism goes individual freedom, one of the most precious possessions of man, dies. Fascism will likely spread to other European governments. It is conceivable that it might some day capture America. Fascism has great virtues and great vices. It is perhaps the only known alternative to Communism for a parliamentary capitalistic social order which is facing collapse. Whether we like it or not, Fascism is a fact and is likely to become an increasing and not a decreasing fact.

Communism and Fascism have several things in common. Both systems have renounced parliamentarianism. Democratic representative forms of government, government based upon the consent of the governed, both have renounced. They will have none of it. Both have said the people are unfit to rule themselves in matters political and economic. Both believe the modern State must become a social order in which politics and economics are one, the political interests and the economic interests made identical in a structure of social solidarity of the highest kind of integration under a dictatorship.

Democracy in politics and capitalism in economics constitute the third outstanding modern politico-economic system. We believe in this system and wish to preserve it. We ought to understand that it faces today its greatest test in history. We fear the effect regimentation would have upon our inalienable rights of individual freedom and our reliance upon the salutary powers of individual initiative, thrift, energetic driving force and ability.

It remains to be seen whether we shall have the wisdom so to regulate our system, making of it an instrument of greater social justice and economic efficiency, as to be able to cope with Communism and Fascism and, at the same time, preserve the real fundamentals of democracy in government and of capitalism in economics. This issue which our American system cannot avoid or in any way evade will put us to a very

severe test. It is our profound hope that our system will meet this test. Pressed for a reply as to which of these three systems will win, we can only say we do not know. No one knows. Only the future can tell.

This, however, we do know: The issue will not be won by flag-waving oratory or vituperative denunciation of other politico-economic systems. It will be won by the patient effort, disciplined intelligence and character of the people who live under these three systems. That system will win which can best demonstrate its practical ability to care for its people without injury to other people. If Communism or Fascism can best demonstrate its ability to bring material abundance, social justice and security to its people without injury to other people, it will win and no power on earth can stop it. If our system, not in the realm of theory but in the realm of fact, can best demonstrate its ability to bring justice, security and plenty to our people without injury and injustice to other peoples, our system will win and no power on earth can keep it from winning. The only justification for any social order lies in the highest possible welfare of all the people who live under it. The world of tomorrow belongs to that politico-economic system which best fulfills this function.

#### SOME CRITICISMS OF CAPITALISM

In criticizing other systems we should have the grace and breadth of mind to listen patiently to the attacks which are made upon our system by its severest critics. Capitalism is declared to be fundamentally unethical. It faces not merely the challenge of change in policies but of complete abolition. The profit motive and the private ownership of property are declared to be fundamentally immoral; men are pitted in cruel and wasteful competition with each other instead of being organized to co-operate for the good of the social whole. It is said the human family can never be a family as long as this

system continues which so inequitably divides their wealth, inevitably arousing their jealousies, hatreds and strife. Sherwood Eddy quotes the English capitalist, Mr. J. M. Keynes, " 'Modern capitalism is absolutely irreligious, without internal union, without much public spirit, often, though not always, a mere congeries of possessors and pursuers. Few or many benevolent business men no more radically alter the system than the many Christian slave owners altered the character of slavery as a system.' " \*

Indeed, our capitalistic system is charged with being the most iniquitous social order the world has ever known. Some of the crimes which it is claimed are committed in its name are:

Twenty-six million human beings killed by its imperialism in the World War. This figure includes both combatants and non-combatants whose lives were destroyed, directly or indirectly. The claim is made that if property throughout the world were socially owned, controlled and distributed for the benefit of all the people, instead of the selfish enrichment of a few, capitalistic imperialism would not hurl millions of men into the hell of modern war which is caused solely—so it is claimed—by a clash of selfish economic interests held for the benefit of a favored few and never for the benefit of the social whole.

Capitalism is charged with the crime of the high death rate in our slums in which the problem of housing is based solely on private profit with practically no thought whatsoever of human need.

Capitalism is charged with the economic (which, it is said, means the *real*) enslavement and exploitation of the masses of the people of the earth, Orient as well as Occident. Capitalism is thus claimed to be a cruel perpetuation of the ancient institution of human slavery. All forms of theoretical freedom—such as religious, legal and political freedom—are said to be

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\**Russia Today.*

but hollow mockeries so long as the masses of humanity are economically enslaved by their capitalistic masters who own, control and distribute primarily for their own selfish interests, most of the wealth of the world.

Capitalism is charged with the crime of the real though not theoretical abolition of the institution of the family throughout wide areas of our social order. Under the capitalistic system—so it is claimed—only a relatively favored few can enjoy real family life and be assured of adequate provision for the needs of childhood and the maintenance of a home. Many millions—so it is claimed—are forced by economic necessity to practice prostitution, abortion and child neglect; family ties are easily dissolved; children are reared in squalor and the majority of human beings suffer all their lives from a fundamental economic insecurity which makes impossible the stability, beauty and peace which ought to characterize man's home and family life.

Capitalism is charged with the crime of making crime waves inevitable. It is claimed that thousands of men and women, boys and girls, are driven inevitably into crime on account of the unjust environment of poverty in which the majority are forced to live under an economic system in which they can never hope for anything beyond a mere drab hand-to-mouth existence if they "go straight." Criminals by the thousand become anti-social because the capitalistic system, so it is claimed, is itself anti-social. It is a system in which nothing is thought of one man making "easy" millions through clever stock-market manipulations, and the whole system, as a system, is based on a ruthless "each man for himself" principle. Why, therefore—since that is the "game" which rugged and ruthless individualism plays, with practically no concern for the good of the social whole—why, so reasons the anti-social bandit type of criminal, is it wrong to "stick up" a rural bank or kidnap a multi-millionaire who made it "easy" in oil wells and "pull down" a "paltry" fifty thousand dollars or so? The

claim is made against capitalism that the root cause of all crime in our social order is due to the fundamentally criminal injustice of our system as a system. Critics of capitalism claim that not until our system administers all its wealth for the good of the social whole, instead of the enrichment of a favored few, will the problem of crime ever be resolved into an intelligent solution.

The capitalistic system is further charged with the crime of thirty million unemployed\* during this depression and, in good times or bad, of forcing the overwhelming majority to live always under the devastating fear of poverty. There are many other terrible indictments which are brought against the capitalistic system as a system. We are told it is fundamentally inefficient and brutal. The claim is made that it can never be amended in any way which will right its basic wrongs; it must be totally destroyed if man is ever to become really and wholly free.

The prediction is made that in future ages historians will look back with amazement upon our era wondering what the reasoning processes of our period could possibly have been in which we proclaimed a religion of human brotherhood and love and yet practiced and defended an economic system which from stem to stern denied every basic precept and principle of our religious faith. And so we are told capitalism and Christianity are absolutely incompatible; they are fundamentally contradictory and one or the other must be and will be destroyed.

In fact, just now, the capitalistic system is charged with being responsible for very nearly everything which afflicts the human species in our modern world. And for that reason, which appears to many of us to be fallacious reasoning, we are told the system must be abolished root, stem and branch. We cannot agree with this view though we recognize its seri-

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\*This figure claims to embrace the unemployment statistics of Western civilization.

ous challenge. We see the necessity for great change in our system but not for its abolition. We see more evils in going over to an entirely different system such as Fascism or Communism. Fascist and Communist denials of individual liberty under the suffocating bureaucracy under which such alternative systems must function appear to us to be inherent evils within those systems which far outweigh the inherent evils within capitalism.

The social ownership of all wealth and its socialized distribution is a noble theory, but who will administer that social ownership, production and distribution? It would have to be administered by powerful, dictatorial government bureaus. The experience of the human race with powerful bureaus and bureaucrats is not reassuring. No matter what theoretical systems we may work out on paper, always we are forced to rely upon human character to administer those systems. We see the danger of rugged and ruthless individualism but it does not appear to us to be as dangerous in its potentialities for human tyranny and enslavement as the dictatorial powers of Fascist and Communist bureaucracy. We cannot call capitalism—as it now functions—a “good” system. From the Christian point of view it is impossible in good conscience to call a system “good” which permits so large a place to selfish individualism. Both Christian conscience and intelligence force a Christian mind to call capitalism—as it now functions—an evil system.

But this system is less inherently evil than any other economic system we know of or can now imagine. The evils of our capitalistic system may be so ameliorated by our learning how to use—instead of abuse—our system, that it can become the most humane economic system under which it is possible for men to live. To some of my radical readers such a statement may appear to be a thing of cowardly compromise; but radicals are blaming our system with evils which should be placed more against our fundamental human nature than

against the fundamental nature of our system as a system. Radical condemnations of capitalism are too inclined to overlook, first, the inherent evils of substitute systems, and, second, to overlook the primal importance of the human element involved in the operation of any and all economic systems.

In this whole complex problem there is an enormous mass of human shiftlessness, downright "onriness," incompetence and dictatorial greed which cannot be disposed of by a mere shift in scenery to some other theoretically perfect system. We need to change our fundamental human nature more than we need to change our fundamental system. All radical followers of Karl Marx expect to change human nature only through the influence of environment. We believe with Marx that if men lived in a more just social order they would be better men, but we cannot agree that a change in mere environment, however Utopian, will quite do for men what they and their social systems need to have done to them.

#### STICKING TO THE GOSPEL

Occasionally one hears an objection raised to a discussion of problems of social justice in our Christian pulpits. The statement is made that a minister should not meddle in such affairs, that it is his business to "stick to the Gospel." A church which does not deal forthrightly and fearlessly with the problem of social justice is not sticking to the Gospel. This challenge lies at the very heart of the Gospel of Christ, and belongs indeed to that revealed religion which is set forth from cover to cover of the Bible.

The Gospel of social justice is found in the earliest books of the Bible. This is, indeed, one of the most ancient elements of our inherited religious faith. The Book of Amos was probably the first of the written books of the Bible. Amos denounces the oppression of the weak and the poor by the strong and the rich. He demands, in the name of Jehovah, a

social order of righteousness and justice. This is the Word of God to man, spoken at its highest in the religion which is revealed throughout the Old Testament. It is a religion which proclaims a God of righteousness and justice who demands ethical dealings between man and man. This high religion of belief in an ethical God who demands ethical conduct among his children was, of course, later lost sight of. It was submerged underneath a mass of priestly ceremonialism which made of religion not a thing of flaming faith in a just and righteous God who required mercy and justice among men in their dealings with each other, but it became a religion of the minutiae of observance of the petty matters of priestly ceremonialism. The social note, the voice of conscience, the voice of social righteousness had gone out of it. God was thought of as requiring the rigid observances of ceremonial formalism in animal sacrifices and the tithing of mint, anise and cummin. It was almost completely forgotten that God was the Ethical Absolute who demanded ethical conduct in the social order in which men carried on their economic life, bought, sold and exchanged their goods and dealt with their fellows.

The religion of the ancient Jew was in this condition—the ethical and spiritual heart of it dead and only the outer husk of its form and ceremonialism left—when Jesus came into the picture. He at once went back with all the ardor of His soul to that Gospel of social righteousness preached by the greatest of the ancient prophets. He denounced those who robbed widows and orphans and He carried His teachings of God's requirements of man to a far higher spiritual and ethical plane than the ancient prophets had. Jesus did not preach two Gospels. Love of God and of man are not two different Gospels. They are one Gospel and can never be separated. The Gospel of individual redemption and social redemption is a unit and these two aspects of this one Gospel can never be separated without violating the original religion of Jesus. According



to the mind of Christ, man, to be saved, must surrender his life absolutely into the hands of God and dedicate his life to the *complete emancipation of his fellows*. It is only because many things happened to the original religion of Jesus after He left the earth that men were ever deluded into thinking Jesus dealt only with individual, and not also with social, redemption. If we stick to the Gospel Jesus proclaimed we are bound to deal with living issues of social justice.

There are some phases of the economic problem upon which good men may differ in their convictions, and concerning which the Christian Church may well hesitate. Christian ministers should be intelligently informed upon economic questions, but they should never pose as authorities on economics. That is not their main business. But on matters of principles that have to do with the bringing in of a more abundant economic life to all people the Church must speak out in the name of Christ.

When a minister speaks on this subject he must be sure he is not merely proclaiming some radical economic theory but that it is the Gospel of Christ he is seeking to teach. He should avoid unnecessary irritation. It is his business to persuade, not to antagonize. When it is necessary for him to hit and hit hard he should do so, but always with only goodwill and love for all men in his heart. He may depend upon the fundamental common sense and desire to do the right thing on the part of his Christian congregations. It is his business to lead men to see what Christ's Gospel of love is bound to mean in applying it to the actualities of our social order. He is interested in the Kingdom of God here and now, a world order organized on foundations of love. In preaching such a Gospel he preaches the Truth and if he proclaims it with good-will and love as the deepest motivation of his own heart his people will listen open-mindedly to his words as one who speaks with authority and they will be influenced by what he says.

Many people express alarm today over the Russian social order which is anti-religious. We Christians should feel a greater alarm over our own shortcomings. We are in danger of being propagandists of a religion that is anti-social. It is an open question as to which is worst—a social order that is anti-religious or a religion that is anti-social. One of the most disturbing elements about vast areas of modern Christianity, is not that we have not solved the problem of economic justice but that so many “Christians” do not even see that the problem exists and that unless we do bring our Christian forces to bear upon its solution our Christian faith is bound to be repudiated by the real forces that are destined to rebuild the modern world.

The Christian Church has always concerned itself with charity, but charity is not enough. We have witnessed in America a scale of Christian philanthropies unprecedented in history. But philanthropy is not enough. Charity is sweet, but too frequently it is like putting salve on a skin eruption instead of treating the systemic roots of the matter and eradicating the fundamental causes of economic injustice which make charity necessary. Christ demands charity among men but He also demands a thing that goes deeper down than charity. He demands love that issues in social righteousness and justice.

Had the social Gospel of Christ always functioned as it should the world would have been saved much horror and bloodshed in the past and our civilization would be a far stronger, more ordered and beautiful thing than it now is. Had the Christian Church dedicated itself to the furtherance of this Gospel, for fifty or indeed for even ten years, in France previous to the French Revolution, there would have been no French Revolution. Had the Christian Church dedicated itself to the furtherance of this Gospel, for even a few decades, in Russia previous to the Russian Revolution, there would have

been no Russian Revolution and the Christian Church would never have been crushed, as it has been in Russia.

Is the use of revolutionary force—the means and methods of brutal violence—the only way by which social justice can ever be achieved? Karl Marx taught that—with a possible exception of England and America—economic justice would never come except through violence. He said all other attempts would prove to be anaemic commitments to impossible sentimentalism. The philosophy of Karl Marx is one of the most powerful forces in our modern world. Has the Christian Church no duty to perform in the face of such a threat? It seems to many of us she has. In pointing out that changes in our social order are both inevitable and desirable, the Church must use every resource at her command to see to it that change comes not by the use of violent force but by the use of reason. She must convert her laity to the wisdom and power of good-will and love in solving our economic problems.

What the Church seeks to accomplish has nothing to do with partisan politics or with the economic vagaries of radicalism. Her primary interest is in the lives of human beings, their welfare and happiness in every realm of their life. Her deepest motivation is Christian good-will and love among all men, expressed in a social order in which her Gospel of righteousness, justice and the more abundant life for every man, woman and child will be not a hypocritical farce but a living reality. The New Deal in which she is interested is the Old Deal in which the Golden Rule of Christ will be not a mere pious sentiment expressed in our churches on Sundays, but an actuality in the real world in which hard-pressed and frequently cruelly treated human beings are living their daily lives.

She does these things because she is committed to Christ's Gospel of Love which is aimed at the complete redemption of man in a way which will bring emancipation to man in every realm of his life. It is intolerable that a relatively few should live in luxury while the masses of our people, in the midst of

an era of plenty, should continue to live, if not in poverty, in fear of poverty all their lives. The Church in the name of Christ must so stir the conscience and change the thinking of our day as to create among the millions of our adherents the will to find a better way. We must create and sustain faith that a better way can be worked out by the use of disciplined intelligence motivated by good-will and love.

The Church should warn all men in this difficult transition period to watch their prejudices. In some corner of the basement or attic of the minds of most of us there is stored away a whole mess and mass of prejudices. Most of us are unaware of the depth and extent of our prejudices and of the danger of such things in the face of the social crisis which now confronts us. There are, of course, unconsciously and unintentionally, violent prejudices on both sides of this question of social justice. Marx and most of his followers are scarred by a violent human hatred. The Communist Manifesto breathes fierce hatred and class bitterness. The Christian faith, loyal to the original spirit and teaching of Christ, has it within her power to lift this issue to a higher moral plane. The passion for social justice espoused by Communism is fed by the fire of bitter hatred of the "upper classes." The passion for social justice of the Christian Gospel is based not upon hate but upon love for all men everywhere.

The Church has a duty to perform in giving to us all a new social moral sensitiveness. Many of the greatest sins of our day are not the sins men commit as individuals but the sins men commit when they act in groups. A Christian will not steal another's goods but many of them will, under our present economic system, strangle the life out of a competing factory and throw thousands out of employment, throw the competing industry into bankruptcy if they can and buy it up for five cents on the dollar—take the thing away from a competing group, if they can. I would not willingly hurt a little child, but, as a member of a group known as the consuming public in our

present economic system, I will buy the best shirts I can find for the least money I am required to pay, forgetful of the fact that perhaps by doing so I am profiting by the cheapness of child labor in cotton mills or of mothers making shirts in sweatshops at cruelly low wages, and in so doing I am indirectly hurting thousands of helpless little children. Our federal government is trying to ameliorate some of these injustices but moral sanctions should reinforce legal codes. These are not primarily legal questions. They are moral issues. We need the inculcation among us of a new moral code, embracing some new definitions of sin. Individual morality is not enough. The worst sins of our age are our social sins. The most glaring example, of course, of our social immorality is to be found in what modern man will do in war. Men whose individual code of morality forbids them to murder will act in groups moving under the banner of patriotism and nationalism, and without the slightest twinge of conscience they will murder millions of their fellow men in war. They will starve a whole population with the weapon of the economic blockade. They will hurl bombs upon defenseless cities and villages from the air. Individual morality is not enough. Many of the most heinous sins of our day are not the things we do as individuals but the immoral and inhuman things we do when we act in groups.

The roots of war are found in our economic systems as we now permit them to operate. Peace can never come to the world until economic co-operation instead of ruthless economic competition prevails between the nations. If our world economic conferences continue to fail us as they have in the past, our world disarmament conferences will continue to be the fiascoes of futility and hypocrisy they have generally been in the past. Our economic systems as we now permit them to operate are the great breeding grounds of war. We pile enormous wealth into the hands of a limited minority who exercise too great a control over our governments which too

often become not the instruments for promoting the welfare of all the people but instruments for increasing the wealth of a limited few. Governments are too often owned and controlled by selfish, powerful minorities whose bidding is done in the enactment of tariffs, in the securing of special trade agreements with other nations, in the economic exploitation of backward peoples in undeveloped areas of the earth whose foreign markets and whose raw materials these selfish, powerful minorities want and take, if they can, from other similar groups which similarly own and control other powerful governments. This was the sort of thing that brought on the World War and it is the sort of thing that will bring on another World War if the masses are not given a more intelligent understanding of this problem that they may work more effectively to uproot the fundamental economic causes of war.

Modern war is an economic conflict, millions slaughtered because the stupidity of modern man still insists nations must ruthlessly compete instead of intelligently co-operate with each other in the field and function of their economic interests. The problem of war and the problem of economic justice are inextricably intertwined. The Christian Church, throughout the world, must so stir the conscience and inform and change the thinking of modern men that they will be led to give economic justice and security to their own people in a way that will hurt no other people so that all people may live in peace with one another.

We speak of the era of super-abundance of Western civilization. That should be tempered by a larger view. At least half of the human beings who live on this planet lie down at night to sleep positively hungry. The poverty and fear of poverty millions of our people have experienced during this depression have been the lot of the overwhelming majority of humanity from time immemorial. There is abundance in the West, but, viewing the needs of human beings the world

around, there is no abundance. There is a great shortage. We need everything the modern machine can do to bring to man the world around a greater economic emancipation. In the intricately interdependent modern world in which we now live, peace, economic prosperity and security will be found to be increasingly impossible for any class, race or nation until these things have been made a reality for all classes, races and nations. In the direction in which our world is now headed we shall be forced to commit ourselves to the practical realization of the solidarity of the problem of Man or else surrender civilization to increasing tensions and social upheavals whose magnitude no thoughtful man can contemplate without serious misgivings.

#### THE MOTIVES OF MEN

There is no magic in any economic system. Corrupt men will wreck the most perfect system. Let us explore this thought a bit more thoroughly looking with closer scrutiny at the men and the motives of our capitalistic system. The profit motive lies at the heart of our system. Under its driving impetus we once attained a general level of prosperity never before known by any people. We are inclined to distrust any social idealism which would seek to lessen the drive toward progress of this motive which lies, we seem to believe, at the very foundation of all human life, evoking from it, as no other motive could ever be relied on to do, its greatest energies and the expression of its most brilliant abilities. We are afraid that if we ever lessen our reliance upon the profit motive, retrogression will set in upon us, the great inertia of human lethargy and laziness dragging us slowly down.

We are forced to admit that this motive, with its enormous release of energy, driving the huge engine of our economic machine, has landed us recently in a rather serious situation. Under its impetus we over-capitalized and over-expanded our

whole industrial structure. Under its impetus we too rapidly over-mechanized our civilization. Our army of unemployed has not come suddenly upon us; it has been growing steadily across thirty-five years. We have so increased our machine-production capacities, so increased our army of unemployed, so concentrated our wealth in a relatively few hands and so denied purchasing power to millions of hands, that just now our vast economic machine lies largely idle and seriously damaged. Critics of our system claim that regardless of what may have been true in the past, industrial civilization has now reached a state of interdependent complexity and mechanized productive capacities which make imperative the complete abolition of the profit motive and system. Like slavery and polygamy, what was once considered moral must now be named as immoral.

We are told that if we are not intelligent enough to see the dangerously disruptive economic effect of this motive, it will, in time, completely wreck our social order. It is urged that we should abolish this motive by law and should inflict severe penalties upon anyone found guilty of harboring this thing any longer in his bosom. Russia considers the profit motive one of the greatest crimes against modern society. Communism has executed many men who were found guilty of it. There are few crimes Russia deals with as severely as she deals with this one. Is Russia right? There are many of us who do not think so.\*

It must be evident that we cannot permit the profit motive to continue to drive our civilized life in the future as in the past. But we shall never be able to handle this menace by law. There is nothing basically wrong with the profit motive. It is not its use but its abuse that makes of it the great social menace it is today. We shall undoubtedly pass and seek

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\*Russia has been forced to compromise with the profit-motive but she is determined to eradicate it eventually from her social system. Whether she will ever succeed in doing so remains to be seen.



drastically to enforce many additional laws restraining and controlling it. But these laws alone, no matter how wise, how many, or how ruthlessly enforced, will never succeed in controlling this motive as it ought to be controlled if we are to produce and sustain a really great expression of civilized life.

A human being is a complicated expression of life's energies and aspirations. His energies are released and his most brilliant abilities are evoked under the stimulus and challenge of many different motives. The profit motive is basic in human nature. It is an instinct and like other instincts that lie at the heart of our life, we do not solve the problem of its driving urge and insistence within us by ruling its legitimate function out of our life, but by learning how to use it with restraint. The profit motive has a legitimate place in any social order. We may seek to crush it out or shoot it down by ruthless violence but that is not the way out. The profit motive, allowed to operate within legitimate bounds, is a constructive force. When it gets out of bounds it degenerates into greed which has wrecked every social order man has yet been able to devise.

A few statistics, taken from conservative sources, should suffice to indicate the manner in which greed has concentrated too great wealth in the hands of a few and denied a more intelligently equitable distribution into the hands of the many in our present social order. Mr. Ogden Mills, Secretary of the Treasury under President Hoover, was quoted in *The Literary Digest* issue of April 16, 1927, as follows: "For the income year 1925, .29 of one per-cent of the population (or less than a third of one per-cent) pay over 95 per-cent of the individual income tax; 17 per-cent pay less than 5 per-cent of the tax, and the remaining 82 per-cent pay no income tax." One of the most serious elements in our capitalistic system is that while it insists in theory upon the right of all to own private property, yet in fact that right is denied to millions of our people. Whatever they may be thought to possess in theory

is so loaded with debts, mortgages and other powers and claims over it as to make it impossible for them to feel they really do have anything by way of property which they can call their own. It is a farce for us to defend private ownership of property as a theory and yet permit the functioning of a system which so ruthlessly denies it as a fact among millions of white-collar and other wage earners.

I am indebted for the following statistics to Mr. Frank A. Horne, of New York, a prominent Christian layman and capitalist who subscribes to no radical economic theories but who sees the danger threatening the foundations of capitalism involved in our inequitable distribution of wealth. There is nothing new about these figures. They recite facts with which the nation is well acquainted, but upon the significance of which we apparently need a yet more insistent and continuous emphasis.

Taking an alleged prosperous year—in 1926 the persons who received over \$35,000 a year income secured over five per cent of the total income of the country, while the per capita income of ninety-nine per cent of income recipients was estimated at \$1,699 per annum by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The National City Bank of New York issued the following figures showing the percentage of income received during 1932 as classified, using 1929 as the 100 per cent base:

Salaries (selected industries) .....	59.3%
Wages (same industries) .....	39.8%
Dividends .....	43.4%
Interest .....	96.7%
Rents and Royalties .....	45.3%

These conditions show graphically the interdependence of capital and labor, since sixty-seven per cent of our consumers' expenditures comes from that enormous class who receive less than \$2,000 per annum. Our "little fellows" represent our

greatest consumers' market. If adequate purchasing power is denied them our whole system is seriously disrupted.

Income Families and Individuals	Number	Per Cent of Population	Income	Expenditures For Food, Home, Attire and Necessities
Over \$5,000	8½ Million	22%	\$57,400,000,000	\$39,400,000,000
Under \$5,000	27½ Million	76%	\$5,500,000,000	\$5,700,000,000

From the above it will be seen that twenty-two per cent of our population receive an excess income of \$18,000,000,000.00; seventy-six per cent suffer a deficiency of \$200,000,000.00. "The market for consumers' goods largely resides in the 27½ million, or 76 per cent of our population receiving under \$5,000 per year. 'The deficiency of purchasing power in the hands of the masses and the excess of investing power in the hands of the well-to-do and the rich,' account for much of the depression. . . ."

The countries that are still committed to democracy and capitalism would do well, before it is too late, to look more closely at what greed is doing to our system. A stupidly inequitable distribution of wealth can go along for years in a seeming flow of healthy prosperity, as through the Coolidge bull-market period of inflated values and credit. But such conditions inevitably pile up an out-of-balance surplus of invested funds. Invested funds are without value unless they can pay a reasonable interest rate. They cannot continue safely to pay a reasonable interest rate unless a corresponding purchasing power is maintained. Surplus invested funds must be poured into some kind of interest-paying enterprise, the creation of apartment houses, office buildings, retail store buildings, manufactured goods, farm mortgages and what-have-you. If these created services or goods cannot be paid for in sufficient amounts to return a fair interest rate, these invested funds sooner or later turn out to be valueless—stiffly handsome lithographed scraps of worthless paper.

The constant liquid flow of purchasing power must be maintained or the basic structure of capitalism is threatened. Its greed turns upon and destroys itself. Such purchasing power not only means a more equitable distribution of current income but it also means the building up of reserves for risks of unemployment which can keep the flow of purchasing power constantly liquid. Reserves accumulated for the payment of wages to money (invested funds) are valueless, in the long run, without corresponding reserves for the payment of wages to labor. From this latter source, of both the white-collar and overalls type, the purchasing power of our economic system comes. When it stops everything stops, and if purchasing power remains stagnant long enough our whole structure will collapse; gilt-edged securities, government bonds, ninety-nine-year leases and all else crashing down together in a tangled heap. Within the framework of capitalism economic security and prosperity must be *abundantly and continuously shared* or our system will not survive. Its complete collapse will not come in a day, but it will come unless we open our eyes to the stupidity involved in our present inequitable distribution of wealth.

Rugged individualism is sound. Ruthless individualism is unsound. Rugged competition is sound. Ruthless competition is unsound. The ownership of private property is sound. The ownership of a disproportionate share of private property concentrated in the hands of a relatively small percentage of our population is economically unsound. We believe in the virtues of self-reliance, the character-forming elements inherent within the ownership of things which represent the fruit of the efforts of one's hands, brain, initiative and thrill of creative effort. These are precious principles of our system. A regimented paternalism in which the government or charity does for one what one should do for one's self will kill the stalwart, self-respecting virtues and independence of soul of our people. The dole is a bad thing, whether it be an income of one thousand dollars a year handed out by an extravagantly paternalistic

government or one hundred thousand dollars a year handed out by a trust company to some rich and lazy moron who never did a day's work of honest toil in his life.

The only known alternative to capitalism's voluntary intelligent and humane disciplining of itself is to place the control, ownership and distribution of all property in the hands of an all-powerful Fascist or Communistic dictatorship. These systems destroy individual liberty when they gain power and they can only keep in power by ruthlessly crushing out all critical opposition. It is easy to pit the real sins of individualism against the theoretical virtues of socialism and make a most convincing case for socialism.\* Such arguments over-simplify the situation, and so shoot wide of the real crux of the issue. Always this major premise is assumed: that under individualism our most gifted and powerful leaders are devils, whereas under socialism the leaders of mankind are assumed to be of angelic disposition. This is the fundamental fallacy of the simon-pure socialistic apologetics. It assumes entirely too much by way of an easy theoretical solution of mankind's basic problem—namely, himself.

The framework of capitalism is sound. Vast changes in it are inevitable and desirable. No living man can envisage the exact form in which capitalism and democracy will continue to function if these basic concepts do survive, as they cannot do unless they preserve their virtues by eliminating their vices. The worst indictment of capitalism is that as we now permit it to function it denies in practice its fundamental precepts. A poverty, fear of poverty and debt entangled people are not a free people. Their liberty is a theory and not a fact. This anomaly will not last indefinitely in a world whose mechanized productive capacities we have only begun to explore. In the dawning era of abundance man will not remain for long the

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\*The term socialism is used here in a broad sense, meaning, generally speaking, the antithesis of individualism.

slave of economic forces whose power over his life he now knows he has the capacity to break.

From the Christian point of view, capitalism and socialism are involved in a strange but inescapable paradox. If capitalism is to survive with permanence and power it must become more intelligently and humanely socialistic. If socialism is to survive it must become more sanely individualistic, seeking to cherish and not to destroy the virtues of capitalism. The framework of capitalism is sound; the ideal objectives of socialism are worthy and workable and inescapable. Sooner or later these two movements, in a world of fluidity and inevitable change, must find a common meeting ground which will merge the virtues of both and eliminate the vices and theoretical fallacies of each. Stated another way around, our social order faces this alternative—the way of Christ or a way of—chaos. The hard-boiled may feel the metallic harshness of our world is too realistic for commitments of love in the functioning of our economic system, but soon or late we shall discover what Christ long ago detected and declaimed, the inescapable solidarity of the life of man.

We shall rise or fall to our doom together. Man must love his fellows and abundantly share with them the blessings of life or we shall all lose our most cherished values and dreams. The Christian layman will learn to take Christ into his business, or forces beyond his control will take his business. As Christians we ought to know we shall never “save” the world unless we change the world. We shall not save capitalism unless we change it, making of it a more Christ-like economic system. One of the greatest fallacies from which many of us suffer is the delusion that to stay still means to stay safe. To stay still would mean to stay safe if the world stayed still, but it is very dangerous to stay still when the world all around us is moving, propelled by driving forces of destiny beyond our power to stifle or stop. That our social order will change there can be no doubt. The question is, shall it change toward a more

Christ-like social order or shall it change toward—a something-else?

The Jesus of history never condemned a rich man simply because he was rich or commended a poor man simply because he was poor. In Christian thinking no stigma attaches to wealth per se. All men are not born free or equal. There are ten-talent and one-talent men. For a man of wealth to distribute all his goods among the poor is not the solution of the problem of poverty. Such recklessly extravagant generosity brings no genuinely constructive solution to the problem of economic justice. Something that strikes us deeper down is needed.

The Christian Church is in the world to convict men of their sin of selfishness and to convert them to a life of sacrificial service and love. Men who are "in Christ" are "new men." Suddenly or by a long process of slow growth they are men who are "born again." They are changed men—changed in the chambered depths of their souls. As the Master told Nicodemus, on that unforgettable night underneath the stars, they are men who are born "from above." The Spirit of God lives within them. Genuine Christianity means exactly this or it means little or—nothing. Changed, Christ-like men are the hope of the modern world. If they are men of brilliant abilities and enormous wealth the greater is their responsibility and opportunity for making the mind of Christ felt in the practical actualities of economic affairs. Our social order does not need primarily their money scattered in charitable generosity. It is in desperate need of their abilities dedicated to the building of an economic system whose primary aim is the highest possible welfare and happiness of all the people who live under it.

Too often becoming a "Christian" has been thought of as merely giving intellectual assent to a creedal statement which made no sacrificial demands upon one's basic motives. Suppose the lay members of our churches, of brilliant practical abilities and enormous wealth, dedicated their lives to the building of a

more Christ-like social order; suppose this same power of wealth and practical ability which is now dominated by the profit motive should really become dominated by Christ-like motives—where might not such men be led? These men whose intelligent energy has so marvelously harnessed the natural resources of the earth geared to a productive efficiency whose possibilities stagger the imagination—suppose these men turned these same brilliant abilities toward the Christ-like solution of our social problems? Suppose . . . suppose . . . ? It is a large supposition but it involves nothing less than the integrity upon the earth of sincere surrender to Christ among those who claim to be His followers.

In no invidious sense the statement may be made that much of the best brains and certainly a great deal of the wealth of this nation belong to the laity of our Christian churches. Suppose these "Christians" were really Christ-like in their sincere sacrificial commitment to the building of a nobler social order? Whoever follows Christ into the tangled maze of the problem of economic justice will be led very far away from the dominance of the profit motive over his life. He may accumulate enormous wealth but if such is the case he will use it as a sacred trust. Nor will mere charitable generosity fulfill his conception of his obligation to Christ. The social problem is bigger than that. It demands our best disciplined intelligence and most brilliant abilities to bring the problem to a Christ-like solution.

If Christians were genuinely Christian, not merely with their charitable gifts of money, but with the use of their minds and the expenditure of their energies the issue of economic justice could be speedily solved in this nation. Our political parties are making studies of and pronouncements on this subject. And so are our Chambers of Commerce, bankers and manufacturers' associations and other similar groups. Imagine the Christian laymen of all such groups meeting under different auspices to study this subject and make recommendations for



its solution—these Christian men of practical affairs submitting their minds to one dominant question, what would Christ have us do? If this whole issue could be lifted above partisan politics and class prejudice and the members of our churches could be led to look upon it with the searching eyes of Christ there are millions of us who would change both our opinions and our lives. The only really serious obstacle is ourselves. Such reasoning may appear platitudinous, beautiful to contemplate as an ideal but impossible of practical realization. If so, then the philosophy of cynicism is true and the basic convictions of the Christian faith are false.

We are in the midst of a crisis which is like the crisis of war. The battle ahead of us, if our economic system is to be preserved, is, to a greater extent than many of us seem to realize, a battle for a higher type of human character. In facing our problems we need to be more realistic. In the crisis we are facing, in order to be genuinely realistic, we must become more intelligently idealistic. This is the real "getting down to brass tacks." Our economic system is breaking down not because we lack raw materials, mechanical efficiency, a consumer's market, engineering skill or executive abilities. We have the men, the money, the markets, the power. We have all these things in abundance. The greatest weakness in our economic system is its ethical weakness. If we fail ethically we shall fail all along the line. If we fail to use the enormous mechanical power and engineering efficiency which we now hold in our hands for the good of all our people in building a more just and humane economic order, we shall wreck the whole elaborate thing with its unprecedented possibilities for the bringing of a more emancipated and abundant life to all.

If we fail to attain greatness as a people ours will be the greatest failure of history. No people ever had a better chance. We have the land, the material resources, the scientific masteries, technical knowledge and skill, the man power, the racial genius, energy and intelligence. But have we the social vision,

conscience and humanitarian idealism the challenge of Christ makes imperative among His followers? It is at this point we are weak and the Church of Christ must make us strong. There is no magic in any economic system. It is men not systems who are the determining element. The moment that thought is raised one is brought face to face with the great urgencies and insistencies of religion. Corrupt men will wreck the most perfect system. All our human systems, whatever they be, rest ultimately for their sanction and soundness upon human character. When we fail there we fail all along the line. We always have and we always will.

Our systems, political and economic, touch the surface of our problems. Religion, which deals not primarily with life's surface but with life's center and depth, can exercise *the* determining factor in this whole issue of social justice. We need not a new system but new men with new motives to operate our system. If this be impossible idealism, then our system is headed for far more serious crises in the future, the ultimate outcome of which no man dare predict and no thoughtful man can contemplate without serious concern. .

## CHAPTER IX

### CHRISTIANITY AND WAR

#### THE LEAGUE OF RELIGIONS FOR WORLD PEACE

DURING the last few years the conscience of the world has been shocked by the shameful disclosures of the machinations of munitions makers and others for whom war affords an amazing opportunity for huge profits. A vast amount of evidence has been brought to light in investigations made in Europe, and reported in several startling books, and also in the efforts of certain senatorial inquiries into conditions in our own country. If anyone reading these pages has not yet been fully informed of these facts, the following books and periodicals are recommended: *Merchants of Death*, by H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen (published 1934 by Dodd, Mead and Company); *Iron, Blood and Profits*, by George Seldes (published 1934 by Harper & Brothers); articles which appeared in 1934 in the magazine *Fortune*; and the May 15, 1935, issue of *The Christian Century* magazine in which a condensed report is made of the facts unearthed by investigations conducted by the United States Senate. After making due allowance for the possible distortion of evidence in the interests of partisan sensationalism, there can be no doubt that there are powerful groups, in all countries, with international connections, who are deliberately fomenting suspicion, fear and strife among the nations in order that they may reap huge profits from the shedding of the blood of other human beings.

Bishop Edgar Blake, of the Detroit Area of the Methodist Episcopal Church, has performed a signal service in condensing much of this data and presenting it in a brochure entitled

*Peace or War? Who Wants War?* He vigorously insists that it is time notice was served upon governments that the lives of "our sons are not for sale" to save the huge speculative investments abroad of a rich powerful minority, and that "in the event of another war property as well as persons shall be conscripted; that every dollar of the nation's wealth shall be drafted; that wages and incomes shall be the same for everybody; that the allowances of the soldiers in the trenches shall be the allowances of factory workers, captains of industry, bankers, admirals, generals," all government officials; "that all living shall be upon the same level; that no luxuries or superfluities shall be allowed to anybody; that complete and absolute sacrifice be required of everyone. If we are to have war, let it be everybody's war or nobody's war. Let all surrender, serve, and suffer alike."\* For the full import of his powerful arraignment of war profiteers and his urgent plea that profits be taken out of war, one should read Bishop Blake's pamphlet in its entirety. Through the generosity of a Methodist layman, interested in world peace, copies may be secured in quantities from The Commission on World Peace of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 740 Rush Street, Chicago.

If, however, as of course Bishop Blake would agree, war is to be abolished the Christian Church must do more than expose the greed world conflict involves or agitate for legislation which will force all citizens to surrender their property, lose and suffer alike in the event of another combat. These things are of enormous importance. They strike at the roots of war, but, along with all this, the Church has a yet more effective weapon she can wield in ridding the world of the scourge of war.

The major responsibility for the abolition of war rests squarely not upon the shoulders of governments but upon the shoulders of the Christian Church. Sir Douglas Haig who was in supreme command of the British land forces in the World

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\*Quoted by permission.

War, said to a gathering of Christian ministers at the close of the war, "Your business is to make my business impossible!" Lord Bryce put the issue tersely—Western civilization will destroy war or war will destroy us. Whatever may or may not have been true in the past, this is true today: war and Christianity are irreconcilable. One or the other must go and will go. The two cannot live together for much longer in the same world.

If the Church of Christ will unite her efforts along this line in all Western countries she can abolish war in the West. The Church has the power to destroy war if she will but dare to use it. In the proposal toward that end, which will be briefly sketched in these pages, we are holding in mind that when one works out a plan on paper one has not thereby worked it out in action. Theory is one thing. The stubborn and frequently devastating facts of actualities are a very different thing. Creating an organization to solve a problem does not mean the problem has been solved or ever can be solved in the way the organization seeks to solve it. Of all these things we are aware. As Christians we are committed to the belief that man's clever schemes and efficient organizations are powerless to bring the great implications of religious faith to pass in the actual affairs of the world unless these things be empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. In the proposal to be suggested the attempt is made to create an organization through which the Spirit of God may work more effectively through living men in bringing peace upon the earth. The proposal to be submitted in this chapter is based upon the conviction that without a revival of great religious faith, committed to dangerously daring ends, war will never be abolished and it may inflict a disaster upon us from which we may never recover. These are not extravagant words. They are alarming words but our world faces an alarming situation.

What are the facts? All peoples want peace. Most governments desire peace. The leading governments of the world

have outlawed war. In the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact they have solemnly pledged their word that they will *never* resort to war for the adjudication of their conflicting interests. Why then are most of these governments increasing their armaments and once more rushing toward conflict? Because governments do not trust one another and there is no existing world organization through which the peoples of the earth can get at one another's real heart and mind. Some world organization must be provided through which the people of the world can get at one another's real mind and can interpret their findings and recommendations to their respective governments and peoples. There is only one movement which can create such a world organization. That movement is religion. To that end the proposal is made of the creation forthwith of a League of Religions for World Peace. This League should become from its inception an instrument of power and dignity.

Any proposal for world peace is bound to sound visionary and impractical. The war system is deeply embedded in humanity's thought and life. We are accustomed to mass murder. Any proposal seeking to abolish our immemorial custom of mass slaughter with its time-honored sanctions of "glory" and "honor" and martial music and "patriotism" and delusions of "duty" for "God and country" is bound to appear as a movement afflicted with many flaws based on very fallacious reasoning. The proposal to whose bare outline this chapter is devoted is bound to be a proposal handicapped by many flaws. But are there no absurd fallacies and enormous stupidities in our present system which is rushing us everywhere toward the brink of the Abyss? Do we not face a question of choosing between two very imperfect systems? The creation forthwith of a League of Religions for World Peace affords a possible thinly promising choice. It is clearly seen and freely admitted that this proposal has many imperfections.

The political and economic problems which beset the modern world will never find complete and rational solution until the

intelligence and will of man has created and maintained a Federated World-State. The League of Nations is a first, feeble and faint beginning in that direction. It represents the expanding intelligence of mankind cautiously projecting tentative feelers into the darkness of the uncertain and unknown future of the world. Through this new international instrumentality the enlightened mind-force of our day is feeling its way—blazing a trail our children must further explore—toward the building of a Federated World-State which will command the loyalty of all men and punish rebellion raised anywhere against its will-of-the-world. This World-State will control munitions and an international police force which would look upon other armies or navies as forces of rebellion against the orderly expression of the collective will of mankind. This is coming.

The doctrine of state sovereignty will go. As the modern world is now constituted there are many states which are sovereign in theory but not one that is sovereign in fact. Sovereign France is the slave of the threat of a rearmed sovereign Germany. A sovereign Germany is chained by the shackles of fear of a sovereign France. Even this sovereign United States of America, more fortunately situated than most other states, found itself dragged by world events beyond its sovereign control into the World War. And even now we plan to spend millions upon a larger navy because of our fear of other nations. No modern state is free. All are bound. None is sovereign. The claim of sovereignty will in time be looked back upon as a concept as ridiculous as that which caused one of the counties of Indiana to attempt to secede, during the American Civil War, not only from our Federal Union but from the State of Indiana.

The time will come when history will no longer be taught to our children in the fragmentary manner in which we now teach it, Germans memorizing the history of Germany, French the history of France, Englishmen the history of England, Japanese the history of Japan; but everywhere we shall teach

*real history*, the history of *man*. The story of Man is the history of his long climb toward ever expanding loyalties and more orderly and intelligent methods of regulating his collective life. This story begins with a vaguely defined family-clan loyalty. It expands into tribal loyalty; this has evolved into the loyalties of nationhood and empire, but this in time will expand into loyalty to the one Kingdom of Man—the Federated World-State with its world parliament, courts, police force and all else that goes to give weight and body and continuity to a state. This is coming, will come, and all genuinely educated and enlightened modern minds see its inevitability. But the full consummation of all of this is *now* a very long way off—a dim shadowy shape looming through the mist of the dawn of the world's tomorrow. These things are not yet. Our present task demands that instead of dreaming of what is to be, we start where we are *now* with things as *they are* and do the best we can.

We are acquainted with the League of Nations with its permanent headquarters in Geneva. Through this League, governments are trying to bring their international problems to the bar of reason that man may find a better way to solve his international difficulties than is afforded by resort to world violence. War today anywhere is very apt to become world war. The League of Nations has justified its existence. It has faults. It has made mistakes. It has its weaknesses. It will learn through the wisdoms wrought by many failures and long experience. The greatest weakness in all such governmental machinery lies in the fact that *organized* public opinion is not behind the League of Nations. The will for peace is in the hearts of the overwhelming majority of the peoples of the earth. But this will for peace has not been made articulate by the people themselves through a world organization voicing their opinion and their determination.

A League of Religions for World Peace, with permanent headquarters in Geneva, could work unofficially in continuous



and helpful contact with the League of Nations. There should be no organic relationship between the two. The League of Religions would not set itself up as superior to the League of Nations. The sole objective of the League of Religions would be world peace. The religions of the earth which join such a league would agree on that one point. They would not be asked to agree on anything else. Theological discussions would be barred from all their deliberations. On only one thing would they be asked to unite and work with one another—the determination to pledge their respective peoples, individually, to peace. By so doing the League of Religions could give to the arm of secular government, working for peace, the powerful aid of the organized public opinion of the masses everywhere. If the arm of secular government should seek to defy this will for peace on the part of the peoples, the League of Religions would be in position to bring the tremendous pressure of public opinion and determination to bear upon governments.

Before writing further of the possibilities of such a League of Religions I ought to say I am not naïve enough, nor sufficiently ignorant of actualities, to overlook the fact that in some areas of the world the influence of religion is positively degrading. These things I know. I know the looseness of organization which characterizes religious forces. I know in some areas of the earth the Christian religion is thoroughly corrupt and apparently there is no voice of conscience any longer alive within it. I could name names and cite areas but such condemnations would serve no useful end and would but drive further apart one thinly promising element that ought to unite us. Such instances of a thoroughly corrupt Christianity are glaring exceptions. There is no movement on earth with hands as clean or a purpose more noble and disinterested than the Christian movement in all its regrettable divisions. The Roman Catholic and Protestant branches of Christianity not only exercise a tremendous influence over Western civilization,

but through their Foreign Missions they are strategically located throughout the earth. No nation, empire, industry—Shell Oil Company or Standard Oil Company or what-not—has the international, interracial contact of confidence and good-will which these Christian forces have. Christian foreign missionaries in Japan, India, China have the entrée to powerful, enlightened non-Christian groups who would listen sympathetically to proposals for the creation of a League of Religions for World Peace. Non-Christian religious groups would co-operate in such an enterprise.

The organizational essentials of this proposal are, first, a League of Religions with permanent headquarters in Geneva, organized for world peace through the forces of man's religious faith and humanitarian idealism. Second, the specific pledging for peace of the individual adherents of these religious faiths. These two elements comprise the main essentials of the idea this chapter seeks to explain.

It would be futile for the Christian religion to seek to enlist the other religions of the world in such a movement until we had first launched it with effective power among our own Christian peoples. "Wars will cease when men refuse to fight." Such has been the historic position of the Quakers. This position is open to serious criticism. The actual events of history have proved its futility. This basic idea can, however, be made very effective if it be placed before the Christian conscience of the Western world in a slightly amended form. To that end the following is suggested:

First, a campaign in which individual Christians of all denominations, sects and divisions, in every parish of Western civilization would be asked to pledge themselves individually to refuse to bear arms or in any other way assist in the prosecution of any future war anywhere in our Western countries *provided* the Christians of all Western nations pledged themselves to do the same. After this first campaign had been completed its statistical results could be reported through the

League of Religions for World Peace to the peoples of the West.

On the basis of this statistical data, which would have yielded a preliminary registration of the will-for-peace on the part of Christian people of the West, a second campaign would have to be conducted in which all Christians of the West, in an unconditional commitment of faith and confidence in each other, would be asked to pledge themselves not to bear arms or in any way assist in the prosecution of any future war, under any circumstances, in which their particular government crossed the boundary line of any Western nation. All wars are "defensive" wars. All peoples have always been led to believe they were fighting a "defensive" war. If we define an offensive movement as the crossing of a boundary line *into* the territory of another country, and, if we have pledged the brothers in Christ of all Western nations *not* to do that under any circumstances, either by crossing a boundary line in person for purposes of attack or by hurling or sending instruments of destruction, explosives, war gas, disease germs or what-not into the territory of any other people of the West, we will have gone a long way toward the building of a warless world in the West.

The pledging of the followers of Christ to such a commitment will require courage and faith in God and in each other on the part of the brothers in Christ of Western nations. When one thinks of the hesitancy many Christian Church people will feel in committing themselves to such a movement, there are questions which confront one's thinking—questions which all Christians ought to face and answer. Are Christians really Christian? Do they really believe in their religion of world brotherhood and love? Can they be led to have faith in God and in each other through the redemptive power and love of Christ? Or is Christianity everywhere an hypocrisy, a sham and an utter futility with no real redemptive power or word to speak or to bring to man? This proposal can be so worked out

that the followers of Christ will be afforded a magnificent opportunity to find an answer to these challenging questions. It has faults. It has possibilities. Pietistic religious anaemia can never make it effective. It will require faith's great commitments and love's great heroisms if our modern world is ever to be redeemed from war which violates in fact every basic principle for which our Christian faith stands.

We are dealing first with the abolition of war in the Christian West but our basic thought involves the abolition of war throughout the earth, Occident and Orient, through the enlistment of the individual members and organizational machinery of all world religions and movements which are motivated by humanitarian idealism. This movement would imply no criticism whatsoever of any person in any country who took part in the last war, in which in every country, men thought they were fighting for a righteous end. It would have among its adherents the honored veterans, in every country, of the World War. None know better than they the horror, futility and insanity of modern war. None can speak with such authority as these men can on this issue.

This proposal is not committed to impractical visionary pacifism which refuses to face grim realities. One does not intend a harsh criticism of the convictions of other men. Among the pacifists are many of the noblest men and women of our day. We honor them; we love them though we may not be able to agree with their views. All pacifists could work in this movement though there are many of us who passionately desire peace and yet our conscience will not permit us to subscribe to the pacifist proposal for the achievement of peace. There are so many infinitely precious values in our world which the mad hysteria of ruthless violence could destroy. As the real world is at present constituted I, for one, cannot bind my conscience to unconditional pacifism until I have a greater assurance of the pacific intentions of the dominant and controlling forces of our practical world. This plan aims to give to all

men everywhere that confident assurance. I am a pacifist in my attitude toward the Dominion of Canada because our two peoples are confident of the pacific intentions of each.

The tense situation in Europe today is largely due to the justified fear and suspicion which France and Germany have for each other when their *governments* face each other. And yet, as everyone knows who has studied this situation at close range, not only do both of these peoples desire peace but their governments also desire it. Both of these governments face problems which they will have to solve, problems that were created by the stupidities of militarism and the lust for revenge of the unjust Peace of Versailles. If these two peoples could get at each other's minds through the kind of organization of world religious forces which this chapter proposes, and if the peoples of these two countries should pledge themselves to peace through their organizations of religion and humanitarian idealism such as this suggestion would make possible, the French *people* and the German *people* could settle their difficulties and live permanently in peace with each other. If something like this is not done, both France and Germany will drag Western civilization into another conflict of arms. This proposal is not based on the assumption that all the world needs to do is to maintain the status quo. It is not based on the assumption that there are no cruel international wrongs and injustices which need to be righted. It is based upon the conviction that war settles nothing—unsettles everything—and resort to its insane violence is a thing of colossal human stupidity.

The procedure this chapter suggests could not be construed as a rebellion against constituted civil authority. Throughout Western civilization we are citizens of nations which, in the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, have pledged themselves never to resort to war to settle any international issue. War has already been outlawed in the West. This action on the part of religious people would be a sincere testimonial of their faith in their governments, their belief that their governments meant ex-

actly what they said when they pledged themselves to renounce war forever. This action on the part of Christian people would be an added evidence of their loyalty to their respective countries in thus upholding their government's hands in carrying out their own nation's solemnly declared pledge to forsake war forever. If the Christian Church in all nations of Western civilization would unite in these policies, the people of the West of other religious faiths would also bring their support to such an effort.

The League of Religions for World Peace would involve no theological compromises. It would involve no changes in systems of belief. It would have nothing whatsoever to do with our differences in matters of religious faith. Religious forces would be agreed on but one thing—the world must be redeemed from the sin of war through the influence of religious faith taking itself seriously. Christianity—on the whole—has never taken itself seriously on the issue of war. There have been a few rare exceptions but, on the whole, in the presence of the challenge of war the Christian religion has generally denied that she really does believe in the most fundamental articles of her faith. As a result of this denial, the world Christ came to save has been committed time and again across the centuries, with the avowed approval of the Christian Church, to the hell of hate and the shambles of horror.

If we Christians will take Christ seriously and we will unite our efforts in a definitely organized movement, the Christian Religion—Roman and Greek Catholic and Protestant—can abolish war from the West and, working in a spirit of humility with all other religious groups, we can take the lead in abolishing war everywhere. We must not forget it is the White Man of our Christian West who is the Terrible Killer of the earth. If Christianity will redeem this White Man from the sin of war the abolition of war everywhere can be accomplished.

The Roman Catholic Church with its magnificent solidarity is splendidly equipped to give to such a movement the great

power and prestige of her co-operative effort. The Greek Catholic Church, the Unitarian groups and the brilliantly equipped organizations of Jewish rabbis in America and in Europe would also join hands in a co-operative effort for such a realization of world brotherhood which would in no way compromise our different religious convictions.

A discussion of details of organization or a survey of the possibilities inherent within religious peace movements already in existence would extend this chapter to too great length. There are, however, definitely organized groups already in existence through which a League of Religions for World Peace could speedily become an accomplished fact. The most promising is the Church Peace Union which was founded and endowed by Mr. Andrew Carnegie in February, 1914, a few months before the misery and insanity of the great war fell upon the world inflicting a wound that ages will not heal. Had the religious forces of the earth been then organized for peace, as they now can be and must be, that terrible disaster could have been averted. Mr. Carnegie foresaw that peaceful methods would never be substituted for war in settling international disputes, unless the churches and religious agencies were organized on a world-wide basis in behalf of peace. Therefore, on February 10, 1914, at a meeting held in his home in New York City in the presence of twenty-nine trustees who had been invited by him to form the Board of the Church Peace Union, he said:

"I cannot refrain from telling you that nothing has surprised me so much as the enthusiastic response made by one and all to the suggestion that there should be formed a Church Union devoted to the abolishment of war. Not one has declined to serve; all have responded from both head and heart, and accepted the task as a divine mission. Truly, gentlemen, you are making history, for this is the first Union of the Churches in advocacy of International Peace, which I fondly hope, and strongly

believe, is certain to hasten the coming of the day when men, disgracing humanity, shall cease to kill each other like wild beasts. I entrust this great mission to you, believing that the voice which goes forth in favor of peace is to prove the most powerful voice of all."

The Church Peace Union has accomplished notable results in its twenty-one years of existence. Among its officers and trustees, past and present, are such well known Catholic, Jewish and Protestant leaders as Dr. William P. Merrill; Dr. Charles E. Jefferson; Bishop Francis J. McConnell; Rabbi Louis L. Mann; Dean Shailer Mathews; Honorable Henry Morgenthau; Dr. John R. Mott; Dr. Frederick Lynch; His Eminence, James Cardinal Gibbons; Monsignor John A. Ryan; Mr. Charles P. Taft II and others.

The following paragraphs are quoted from the last annual report of the Church Peace Union.

"The World Alliance was organized by the Church Peace Union and now has Councils in thirty-three nations, and represents in a broad way all the Christian Churches. The first President of the Alliance was the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Councils in each nation are composed of either delegated members from all the Churches or, as is the case in the United States, adherents from the Churches and other religious bodies are elected to membership in the governing board of the Alliance because of the position held by the individual in his own communion. The Alliance carries on its work through an International Committee made up of members elected from the National Councils. There is also an Administrative Committee and an International Secretariat with offices in Geneva, New York, London, Paris, and Berlin, and with local Secretaries in Riga, Stockholm, Rome, and Athens. The World Alliance holds an International Conference every three years and has arranged a very large number of Regional Conferences.

"In the International Conferences, questions of policy are dealt with on a broad international scale. Resolutions



have been passed and programs outlined affecting treatment of minorities, education for peace, work for disarmament, the establishment of a Peace Sunday, revision of Treaties, and the teaching of international obligations in relation to true ideals of patriotism.

"At the Regional Conferences, specific questions between the various countries have been discussed, as, for instance, the French and German Churchmen discussed the question of 'war guilt' and the occupation of the Ruhr as a bar to peace, while the delegates from Czechoslovakia and Hungary discussed the language and minority difficulties. . . .

"The Church Peace Union has on its Board, representatives of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish faiths. . . . The World Alliance numbers both Catholics and Jews not only in friendly but in co-operative relationships. The Church Peace Union has been represented in a number of great Catholic gatherings in behalf of peace. It is in closest accord with the Catholic peace agencies in Europe and with Catholic peace societies in the United States. The Secretary of the Church Peace Union was one of the speakers five years ago at the Catholic Peace Congress held at Frankfort, Germany. The Church Peace Union has established unofficial relationships at Rome with the authorities of the Vatican. The Church Peace Union is also in closest co-operation with the Jewish agencies working for peace, and with the outstanding leaders in the various countries. . . .

"The Church Peace Union in 1924 determined to set up an international organization to promote a meeting of representatives of all religions to discuss ways and means for promoting world peace. A Conference was held in Geneva in 1928, with some two hundred delegates representing all the living religions of the world. Out of this grew a world organization and a constituency of some fifteen hundred members of the International Committee. In addition, there is an Executive Committee and a group of international organizations, including one in India, which represents all the religions of that country, and one in Japan. The personnel of the World Alliance represents in a practical way the Western Christian member-

ship in this world-wide movement. . . . This organization brings together for the first time the adherents of the world's great religions for the practical purpose of helping to rid the world of the menace of war. . . . In co-operation with the World Alliance, the Church Peace Union has been personally represented at the League of Nations Disarmament Conference in Geneva from the very day that it began its labors."

There are organizations already in existence which could take the lead in establishing the League of Religions for World Peace. Lack of space prohibits even mentioning their names. The program of the Church Peace Union has been emphasized because none has done a better work or affords a more hopeful channel for a yet more effective achievement which would unite the efforts of numerous groups. The League of Religions would be broad enough so that no sectarianism of place, power or prestige, should enter into it. Its representative leaders residing in Geneva should be the most gifted leaders of the religions of the earth. Religion faces no greater task than this one which should demand her best representatives.

The world we live in is far from an ideal place. I have traveled through backward areas of the earth, where life, both of foreign visitors and natives, would be unsafe and impossible were it not for the presence of military power. Life in our bandit-bullied America is none too safe. For the modern world to abandon all its military power at this moment would be about as sensible as abolishing our city police forces. All men are not yet angels and military force has its part yet to play in keeping righteousness, justice, law and order upon the earth. The international police force which was recently sent by the League of Nations to assure a peaceful and just plebiscite in the Saar Basin is a case in point and sets a promising precedent of far-reaching constructive potentialities. The leaders of this movement within the Christian Church must be practical statesmen capable of meeting and holding their own with the prac-

tical statesmen of the governments of the earth who are charged with very great and very practical responsibilities. The Christian Church needs for her leadership in this movement not visionary fanatics but men with level heads who can work co-operatively with sanity and sense with other men.

It is difficult to understand how anyone could fail to see the possibilities inherent within the establishment of a League of Religions for World Peace with a permanent staff of men and women of dignity and ability of all faiths working in their permanent headquarters in Geneva interpreting the problems and will-for-peace of all peoples to one another, to their respective governments and all governments. Such a group would bring to light hidden issues and tendencies, injustices and aspirations which are bound to lead to war unless these things be considered with reason, religious compassion and idealism that war may be *prevented*. When world injustices are permitted to exist for too long, when war's mad hysteria flames into action it is—too late.

Wars cannot be stopped once they are started, but they can be prevented. There is no power on earth so capable of preventing war as would be the power of religion organized on a world basis and with a world co-operative outlook. The war machinery of all governments is designed primarily for the killing of our enemies. That way lies disaster. The peace machinery of the League of Religions would address its energies to the killing of our enmities. That way lies sanity and promise of a world-order sustained by reason and understanding instead of by resort to the appeal of hate and brutal violence. Two of the most powerful forces on earth are religious faith and humanitarian idealism. A movement big enough to challenge the imagination and harness the passionate determination of these two forces would be a movement of such sweep and magnitude that it could work its will upon the world because it would express the will of the world!

Traveling over Europe, traveling over the Orient, talking

everywhere with the real people whom war butchers, one finds that everywhere everybody wants peace. Why then do we not have peace? Why do we continue to increase armaments? Why this accelerated preparation for the agony and slaughter which modern war involves? Why when everybody wants peace are we everywhere rushing toward mass destruction? Because this yearning desire for peace has never been made articulate by the people themselves.

Why cannot the people secure their world-wide desire for peace through their governments? There is a reason. All governments are proud and many governments are cynical. No government would itself initiate the individual pledging of its people for peace because governments are too touchy in matters of national pride. They are fearful if they did initiate such a movement it would be interpreted by other always proud and frequently cynical governments as a sign of national cowardice and weakness. That is why this movement must work from the bottom up. It cannot begin in the high places of pride and power of governments. It must begin in the low places of human humility and righteous determination.

That is why religion must join hands with humanitarian idealism for the accomplishment of world peace. Religion is humble, "meek and lowly in spirit." It does not resent insults. It grows great in rising above such things. Genuine religion is never cynical or puffed with pride. Governments at best are all far removed from their peoples. Religion and humanitarian idealism lie close upon the heart of the average humble human being, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Moreover, the terrible meekness of religion is terrible indeed when once religious and humanitarian idealism become inflamed for a righteous cause. If their muffled voices could be made world articulate the meek would inherit the earth. No government could stand for very long before the quiet gaze of Goodness of the Terrible Meek of the earth, once these humble millions

were joined together in a mighty determination for world peace!

This chapter from its original form has been much reduced. In its first draft too great detail was gone into concerning the organizational structure, plans and methods for conducting a world wide propaganda, requisite for bringing this movement to a successful issue of sufficient power to command the ultimate objective it would seek. But all this detail I have decided to omit, not unmindful of the fact that grim realities must be faced, but mindful of the fact that detail of structure of organization, plans and methods should be the result of the working together of many minds in a process of give and take.

The basic plan and purpose involved in this discussion, if stated with completeness, weighing and seeking to answer the thousand and one flaws, fallacies and misunderstandings which always arise in the consideration of such a theme, would require the expansion of this chapter into a very large volume. All I have attempted to do, in the chapter as it now stands, is but to outline an idea and to clothe the idea with a sufficient detail regarding corporate activity as to give some weight and body to it. The detailed working out must be submitted to the hammering criticism of many minds representing many different viewpoints. The essential thought is that through existing religious and humanitarian movements the best possible channel is afforded for a world ballot and pledge to peace through which the inarticulate masses of every area of the earth may make vocal and effective their determination for peace through a permanently organized League of Religions dedicated solely to that end.

If this movement is to succeed, and Protestantism is to give the initial impetus to it, it is imperative that Protestantism set the example of humility, stripping from her mind at the start any ambitions for place, power or prestige, seeking in this movement to be not a master but a servant of all men.

## WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

But suppose such an idea does not take hold? Suppose it be shelved for some more patient plan while world Christianity waits for a more propitious time? There are some things which cannot be hurried. One must have patience. Man, we are reminded, is a fighting animal with only a thin veneer of culture encasing his fundamental brutality. He is by nature pugnacious. World peace, we shall be told, is a dream which cannot be realized until the coming of some nebulous day in the dim and distant future. The Church of Christ, desiring peace, must wait until . . . tomorrow. The plan this chapter suggests is too precipitate. But, may we not ask, if we do not do this what is the alternative?

One alternative is to have our various denominations "go on record as favoring world peace." Such a procedure, long employed by all our religious groups, does great good but the hypocrisy and futility of final dependence upon it must be apparent to all thoughtful men. A very effective work has already been accomplished through the Christian Church in educating the world toward peace. I do not discount in the slightest the important function this educational process has fulfilled in the past nor the imperative importance of the place it must continue to fulfill in the future.

The proposal outlined in this chapter is bound to face the counsel of the wisdoms of lethargy, which will sincerely insist that now is not the propitious time for such a plan. All we can now do, we shall be told, is to pursue more vigorously a general policy of peace education. If the Christian Church does nothing more daring than that we ought clearly to understand we shall have adopted a policy which involves the expectancy of war and perhaps we had better identify our efforts with the militarists who insist upon a vigorous policy of preparedness. When the war we anticipate comes we shall be prepared to strike suddenly and thus, perhaps, mitigate the extent of its suffering. With the memory of the horror of 1914-1918 still

fresh, our war dead hardly cold in their graves, in the past five years the whole world has passed from a post to a pre-war psychology. Shall the Christian Church succumb to this state of mind? What millions are thinking will be, will be if herculean efforts are not set in motion. We are confronted with a situation in which, at any moment, violence and hate are apt to sweep over the world.

Unless the will of the masses be made articulate our governments are powerless to prevent war. With their huge armaments and their deep suspicions, should a real international crisis be precipitated tomorrow, all our Peace Pacts outlawing war, the World Court and League of Nations would become mere scraps of paper. These things would go down like a house of cards before the wind of modern war's flame and fury. Colossal insanity would once more hold the world powerless in its hideous grip. Our modern war machines are terrible gigantic things of soulless mechanism. They tower mountain high above all else man has ever made with his hands. Once they begin to move we Lilliputian men who have built them are powerless to stop them until through sheer exhaustion their force is spent.

One knows the futility of expressions of seeming extravagance. One tries to write with restraint. One wonders if one's mind is obsessed and distorted with an exaggerated picture of the doom which awaits humanity if something revolutionary be not done to break the power the war system has over us. One tries to be reasonable but rationality keeps pointing to but two alternatives: we will destroy war or war will destroy us. Science has placed in the hands of modern man a destructive power he has never previously possessed. We have only begun to realize the future possible development of the efficiency of our instruments of mass slaughter which increasing scientific knowledge and skill will yet place in our hands. One questions the ability of humanity to survive if it anticipates an indefinite continuation of perennial processes of mass murder. It would seem somewhere a point of biological exhaustion is bound to be

achieved beyond which further blood-letting will be impossible. Such a period does not now appear to be very close to us. There is perhaps sufficient biological energy still left to us to enable us to blow one another to bits for some centuries to come.

There is, however, another and far more immediate threat inherent within our war system which we ought more clearly to recognize. Millions of armed men held together under the military discipline of stable governments are capable of a destructive energy which is terrible enough. But under the tension, stress and strain of another world conflict is it not possible that the orderly processes of governments might collapse? What then? The next world war which many are now confidently expecting and for which most governments are apparently preparing is predicated upon the assumption that accredited governments will be able to hold millions of men against the flame until its fury shall have burned itself out. One questions the ability of governments to maintain such control under their accustomed discipline of military authority and the excitements of mob-psychology induced by nationalistic propaganda. Before another world war is fought out to the bitter end, according to the ancient rules of the militaristic game, is it not likely the masses will rise everywhere—as they did in Russia—and overturn governments ushering in a period of universal chaos the like of which the world has never known before? Such an eventuality is possible—is probable. . . .

Ours is a period of vast alternatives. We are confronted with a new era of high emergencies and terrible probabilities. If religious forces fail to unite their efforts in some daringly constructive movement which will make articulate the will of the masses for peace, the world we shall condemn our children to live in is fraught with possibilities of unprecedented disaster. The day for half-measures and timid compromises is rapidly passing. What should be done must be done quickly or it may be too late.



## CHAPTER X

### THE UNION OF PROTESTANTISM

#### A LARGER VISION

THE division of Protestantism is another one of those stubborn facts of actuality which must be brought to solution if our Christian faith is to meet the vast world issues which previous chapters have attempted to outline. A larger vision of the part our Christian forces must play will solve the problems produced by our little loyalties and narrow views. The Federal council of the Churches of Christ in America and the Church federations which exist in many of our cities represent solid achievements in Protestant co-operation extending across several decades. These movements have produced distinguished leaders whose lives have been committed to the ideal of union and whose efforts have produced tangible and impressive results. In the field of Protestant international relations aimed at Protestant world solidarity there are also several organizations which represent promising possibilities. The idea of national and world union of Protestantism is not new. There are solid bases of past achievement and experience upon which a more substantial structure can be built. To enter into a detailed discussion of the literature dealing with the history of these national and international ventures in Protestant co-operation would extend this discussion quite out of proportion to the main focus that must be observed in this volume which is under the necessity of treating briefly such a wide range of themes. We shall be forced to reduce the discussion to which this chapter is devoted to a minimum.

One wishes it were feasible to discuss the union of all or-

ganized Christian groups throughout the world. Such an ultimate goal must remain for the present an unfulfilled dream. One feels the sense of tragedy in having to admit that this is true. There are thoughtful students of contemporary events who tell us the only two world religions which will survive the world revolution, through which we are now passing, are Christianity and Communism and in the end atheistic Communism will win clear across the earth. One need not agree with this gloomy prophecy but one cannot ignore its implications. Atheistic Communism is converting vast areas of life in the Orient. It is making appreciable inroads into many of the older European cultures. It has already displaced Christianity in the allegiance of millions of people in Russia. It is tragic that Christianity, not only in facing atheistic Communism, but in facing so many other world issues is so divided against itself.

One thing is possible. Protestantism can and must unite her forces. She has no moral right to urge the union of all Christian groups until she first unites herself. When this is accomplished we shall be in a better position to seek a larger organic unity among all followers of Christ. The universal Church of Christ never will unite on a lion and lamb basis of union, the lions swallowing the lambs. Any such proposal, however sincerely made, is impossible now or at any imaginable time in the future. Union is bound to be the result of a process of tolerant compromise on many points. Our sectarian divisions represent the perpetuation of ancient doctrinal differences of opinion which fulfill no useful purpose in the modern world. We face the tragic reality of a world everywhere divided against itself. It will be found increasingly difficult for the Church to appeal to the world to heal its tragic divisions when she has not yet healed her own divisions.

Our situation is, in so many ways, nothing short of pathetic. If one will peer closely into the average small community here in America one will find many little competing churches en-

gaged in a futile struggle to carry on. One sees little groups, worshipping too frequently in unattractive places, often poorly led, and afflicted with a depressing defeatist attitude. The congregations are pathetic in their impotence and the ministers, especially if they be gifted men afire with the greatness of their mission, battle against insuperable odds.

What is true of these smaller communities is true also of our cities. In so many places we have too many churches, dank smelling and gloomy places, pitifully small congregations. As one drops into these places and witnesses the depressing futility which dominates so many of them one feels at times that it is true that the modern world has long since marched on and left our Christian movement far behind, abandoned it because it has failed to keep pace with the tempo and urgent needs of our times. Of course there are exceptions. There are thousands of churches aglow with life, making a real impact upon reality, performing a vital and beautiful ministry which touches and lifts the lives of many millions. Statistics show that we are growing but statistics can be quite misleading. Taking it by and large, as one peers inside our churches in over-churched communities, one is depressed by the picture of what the stupid perpetuation of division is doing to our local work all over these United States. The tragedy of our division goes deeper than the mere effect upon local congregations. When we face the great issues of our day we realize our impotence because we have not united our strength.

What keeps us divided? If in some magical way we could wave a wand and suddenly bring together all our people who are now ripe for union we would probably have at least ninety per cent of our numbers, which means between thirty million and thirty-five million people here in the United States alone. That the actualities of the situation all over America may be made vivid, I shall be pardoned for citing my own congregation as a typical incident of what has already taken place within practically all of our Protestant churches. As such things go

in mid-west America, this is an historic church with good reason to feel a strong denominational consciousness and pride. But such is not the case. Our constituency represents many of the oldest and leading families of our city, but they have no feeling of denominational clannishness. By far the majority of our membership, and the members of our governing boards were not born or reared in the Presbyterian Church. Though this church bears the name Presbyterian it is in reality a union church. It is a congregation of people drawn together from practically every Protestant church, with a few whose background is Roman Catholic, scattered in among them.

If we emphasized Presbyterianism this church would lose her power and influence immediately with the large numbers she serves. This congregation is not interested at all in Presbyterianism as over against some other ism. The interest of our people is solely in genuine world-wide Christianity. Even the word Presbyterian is very rarely spoken in this place. We deliberately avoid using the word. These people do not have a denominational consciousness. One may think, if such be the case, we are indifferent in our attitude toward the national and world needs of our group. The reverse is true. This church leads this synod in supporting our denomination's boards and agencies and yet the denomination, in any exclusive sense, does not appeal to this congregation. Of their own volition—we have drawn not a few members into this congregation who have told us frankly they left certain other churches because they grew weary of having things denominational emphasized. The generation interested in denominational preservation is gone.

The present generation cares little for any denominationalism. It is, in fact, positively bored and repelled by anything that smacks of denominationalism. What is true of this particular church, has been cited at length not because it is unique but because it is general. It is not unusual but usual in all our Protestant bodies from one end of America to the

other. Denominationalism is already dead! It only needs to be decently buried. Protestantism has long ago united in our pews. The official consummation of Protestant union would mean merely the technical ratification of what is already an accomplished fact. This statement may sound too sanguine to some whose minds are still limited by little loyalties and narrow views, but, after nearly twenty years in the ministry in which I have served in both small-town and city churches, I believe it represents the latent mood of nine-tenths of our people. My particular congregation would ratify a statesman-like plan of union without the slightest hesitation, and I am very confident there are tens of thousands of other churches which would do the same. Citing my own city as typical, I would anticipate no serious difficulties among the laity and clergy of Indianapolis in working out our local problems of mergers once a far-sighted plan of union on a national scale were placed clearly before us. In some of our churches we observe a few different customs but, taking it by and large, a stranger attending our services could not tell which were which were it not for the sign-boards on the front of our buildings. There are a few exceptions but they are *exceptions*.

What is true in this city is true all over this nation. Nine-tenths of us are already one. There are no important doctrinal differences of conviction which any longer separate our denominations. Theological differences of opinion are stronger within our groups than between our groups. And yet this division between the fundamentalist and liberal elements within all our denominations is more apparent than real. Fundamentalism and liberalism can be easily reconciled if our doctrinal discussions be brought out into the open and we speak to each other with Christian candor and love. Protestantism, in all her divisions, believes the same great fundamentals of our inherited faith. So far as our basic convictions are concerned we can unite and we should unite at once.

Union need not make all our churches monotonously identi-

cal. All of our forms of worship need not be the same. In many ways a very great variety should characterize our life. A dead sameness would destroy one of the finest elements in our Protestant heritage and life. There will always be, and there ought to be, variety among Christian people and Christian churches. Some will emphasize formality, some informality. Some will emphasize an appeal to the emotions, others an appeal to the intellect; both seeking to stir the conscience and move the will. Unity need not crush variety, local or individual liberty and freedom. Union could make all of these things more abundantly possible.

We have in these United States a true and powerful civil union of many widely diversified elements. The same kind of union can be achieved by Protestantism. Any one wishing to fortify himself with devastatingly impressive arguments against such a union of Protestantism is referred to the recorded proceedings of our American colonies when they debated the issue of adoption of the American Constitution and the establishment of the United States of America. There are so many little questions a union of Protestantism will have to answer. But, as in all things, the larger vision can answer all of our smaller questions. A Federal Union of Protestantism, fashioned along the lines of our civil Federal Union is feasible and can make Protestantism really one. Union need never mean a crushing and blighting sameness. Many different kinds of church life, manners and customs will always be needed to reach the wills of men and to change the hearts of men, who are themselves not all alike in their tastes and temperaments but whose most striking similarity is, in many respects, their dissimilarity.

The analogy of our civil government affords the best possible model for the ecclesiastical structure of Protestant Union. One of the distressing problems of my own denomination—which I use to illustrate what is true with all the others—is our lack of a truly national deliberative parliamentary body

and our oversight in the matter of developing in greater numbers leaders of experienced statesmanship. Our national General Assemblies are mass meetings, not deliberative parliaments genuinely representing our people as a whole and capable of expressing their will or wisdom. The overwhelming majority of our commissioners to all of our annual General Assemblies are inexperienced men, attending the national assembly for their first and last time. A very limited group of men hold this large body of men in the hollow of their hand. This limited group is composed of good and great men whose actions are frequently characterized by caution for fear some commissioner may upset the apple-cart by bringing upon the floor of the Assembly the open discussion of some real issue. Our leaders are wise in choking such discussions because these mass meetings are no place for such issues to receive a genuinely parliamentary debate and deliberation. A refined and wise censorship too frequently steers the processes of our thought and action into the quiet harbors of innocuous tranquillity.

And so year after year we are too inclined to mark time, repeat platitudes, have our emotions stirred and our thought stifled, while the great world outside marches on in its progress toward frustration and futility, largely because we fail to address our full powers to its tragic need for genuine Christian redemption.

Our General Assemblies are ridiculously unwieldy. The numbers present are entirely too large. The overwhelming majority of the commissioners are not true parliamentarian representatives of the Church as a whole, but are inexperienced men led like sheep. This may sound like too harsh a criticism of our national denominational gathering. My spirit in writing what I have may be grossly misunderstood. In attending our General Assemblies I have been moved with emotion by the thrill of our denominational greatness, and by chagrin and despair over our failure to face—with our full powers—the

tragic realities of our day. For this failure no man or particular group of men are to blame. We are all guilty.

It would seem a union of all Protestant groups into one massive United Church would further confuse the unwieldy character of our governmental structure. Such would not be the case if we followed the pattern of government worked out by the wisdom of our American fathers who devised our civil structure of government. Our ecclesiastical representatives in our state and national parliamentary bodies should be few in number and should be elected to serve for years. In this way we would train experienced ecclesiastical statesmen whose record would be scrutinized by the electorate before whom they would have to appear for re-election from time to time. I refrain from writing further of details, but the point should be clear that a union Protestant Church representing a wide diversity on many things, could follow to a considerable extent the pattern of our civil government in a structure which would be genuinely representative of a constituency of thirty to forty million people, without such a merger confronting us with an impossible unwieldiness due to the enormous size of a United Church.

Protestantism needs to develop a larger number of ecclesiastical statesmen, taught by experience and meeting together in genuinely parliamentary, deliberative gatherings. A union of Protestantism can give us these things without encroaching upon any of our cherished local autonomies or individual liberties. The argument that union will make us too unwieldy or that it will put a blight upon our liberties is unsound. We can easily find solution for these difficulties—if our thought and action upon this matter be characterized by true Christian greatness confronting a world that is in danger of imminent and perhaps irreparable disaster. The day for pettiness has past.

The federation of our forces should be along geographical lines and not along denominational lines. A denominational



federation would perpetuate sectarianism and defeat its own ends. A federation along geographical lines, cities, counties, states, nation, need not encroach upon any valid diversities in forms of worship or individual liberties, but would give to us a greater local and national solidarity. I know of no worthy service, for example, which Presbyterianism should give to my city or state that it cannot far better give in co-operation with all other intelligent Protestant groups. If Presbyterianism as a name should sink from sight in this city, state and nation its influence would be greatly enhanced and its distinctive contribution to vital Christianity need in no way be lost. What is true of Presbyterianism is true of all our enlightened groups and has been cited merely by way of illustration.

We Protestants of this generation inherited these church divisions from our fathers. We are grateful for what these organizations have done in the life of past ages. Everyone of us has every reason to be proud of the name we bear so far as past achievements are concerned. But everyone of us should be ashamed of any desire to perpetuate these sectarian divisions into the future. One thinks of a union of all Protestant groups in this nation under some such title as, "The United Church of Christ of the United States of America." One thinks of a union of all Protestant groups throughout the earth under some such title as, "The United Church of Christ of the World"! All our denominational names pale into insignificance before the challenge of tremendous possibilities suggested by such names. A united Protestantism will not be a united Protest against any other religious group, but will seek to work in co-operation with all groups. The word Protestant would be dropped from our vocabulary. "The United Church of Christ" would hopefully anticipate that day when all followers of Christ may be one.

If our Protestant denominations wish to achieve true Christian greatness today they will sacrifice themselves, lose and

find their life in giving themselves to ends that are very much greater than themselves.

#### DIFFICULTIES

Any movement for Protestant union will face difficulties. It will be retarded by the lethargy which is inherent in all human life and in all humanly conducted institutions. People do not like to be disturbed, especially if they have found a comfortable place in which to sit and a smooth worn rut in which to move. Ancient and conservative institutions, encrusted with centuries of custom and tradition, do not like to be disturbed. They do not like to be reminded that they were all born in periods of upheaval in human affairs and that once again heroic energy is demanded of all movements which seek to meet and to survive the world crisis which now confronts us. It will take a mighty challenge to arouse us from our denominational lethargy and the slow drag of life's persistent inertias which sometimes initiate our institutions into death before we become aware of what is happening.

The Christian Church is a conservative institution. It ought to be. An institution which is dedicated to such timeless elements as those with which religious faith deals, ought to be slow about changing. Therein lies one of religion's greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses. There are times when change is imperative. Such a time was the period of the Protestant Reformation. Such a time is once more upon us in the upheaval in human affairs through which the world is now passing. Once again the Christian Church confronts the necessity for change. And once again the imperative necessity for change is bound to be resisted by the dead weight and drag of human lethargy, custom and tradition. The council of caution is bound to be heard.

Caution can be a very dangerous thing. Conservatism frequently aids and abets the collapse of the very thing it seeks

to conserve, by its blind surrender to inertia, its unwillingness to face serious situations whose only solutions can be found by the making of changes which anticipate collapse and prevent it by wise liberal action. Resistance will come from certain influential persons who will declare—in all sincerity—that Protestant union is beautiful as an ideal but impossible in fact. They will present a most impressive array of practical difficulties which stand in the way due to legal technicalities which would be involved in the transferring of titles to property. There will also be those who will be eloquent in their prayers but elusive in their efforts for union, which can never be achieved unless work that is determined be combined with prayer that is genuinely devoted to the greatness of the end sought. Surely it cannot be the will of God that Protestantism should continue its stupid division and un-Christian competition. If the will of man more zealously strives to express the will of God Protestant union can become a fact. But enormous difficulties arising from issues real, imaginary and petty are bound to be faced. Dealing patiently with these problems they can be met if the seriousness of the world crisis be placed clearly before our people in a campaign of information which is designed to cause them to see more clearly the critical realities of our day, and in a revival of spiritual life which will search more earnestly for the will of God for our times.

A union movement will also meet resistance from a very small minority, in all our groups, of doctrinal obscurantist obstructionists—our little men, who, in Christ's words, "strain out a gnat and swallow a camel." This element does not represent the rank and file of our fundamentalists. Liberalism can be quite as intolerant as fundamentalism. Our laymen must be on their guard against appeals which will be made to their prejudices. The only antidote for this is an informed laity. There is no essential belief in our faith which the average layman is not fully capable of understanding. If our laymen be informed on the great fundamentals of our faith

they will be prepared to resist the appeals of little men who will seek to confuse this whole issue under a cloud of words which an informed laity can detect at once are words that utterly miss the mark. In writing this I do not mean to imply that our obscurantist obstructionists are insincere men. They are not. They are good men but they are mistaken men. There are only a few of them but they can become disturbingly vocal. In civil political affairs an educated electorate is our best safeguard against political appeals to prejudice. An intelligently informed laity is Protestantism's best safeguard against obscurantist obstructionist minorities. Theological medievalism and narrow denominational prejudice can have no dominion over an informed laity. Without vigorous and intelligent backing from the laity our clerical leadership is helpless. In an alert informed laity lies the future hope of Protestantism.

There are facts of a practical nature that our laity should demand be made known. An accurate survey of Protestantism in America would disclose an enormous waste of effort and money. A survey of our duplication of effort in over-churched villages, towns, city neighborhoods, hospitals, colleges and seminaries, would probably disclose that at least one-third of these institutions should be closed and merged with others.

If Protestantism united, as every dictate of common sense and genuine Christianity demand it ought to do, a saving of many millions of dollars would be effected in an annual bill which is paid to denominational competition and futility. Who pay this bill? The laymen of Protestantism pay it and it is a very large one. If Protestantism united its forces it could perhaps reduce its annual bill by one-third and could probably raise three times the money it now raises to meet really great and tragic human need on a far vaster scale than we can ever hope for under our present régime of stupid division with its inevitable waste and futility.

The Protestant laymen of America should demand a sweeping and accurate survey of the facts in this whole situation both at home and abroad. It is not a question of saving money. It is a matter of not wasting money in order that we may be better enabled to do a far greater and more intelligently generous work.

How successful can a union movement be at this time? No one knows. I believe—though I cannot prove it—ninety per cent of our constituencies can be united now. Ten per cent will not unite. No attempt should be made to coerce this minority. Their convictions must be respected. Religious faith uses a very weak weapon when it seeks to drive men. When we seek to enlist men in behalf of some great cause for Christ we can only compel them by the compulsions of His love. There is no other way. There are between thirty-five and forty million Protestants in these United States. The number of Protestants throughout the world runs into a very large figure. A union of ninety per cent of this vast power for Good would mark, I believe, one of the decisive turning points in human history. What such a national and world organization could do in grappling with the real issues of our times is incalculable.

## CHAPTER XI

### TRENDS OF OUR TIME

#### THE DANGER OF LIBERALISM

IN CLOSING this volume there are a few essential considerations which should be brought into sharper focus.

In the last several chapters our thought has been largely occupied with practical issues of our day. Underneath the consideration of all these tense issues which call for deeds in their solution, something deeper looms, a more fundamental question is asked and must be answered. Something that is basic must be found upon which modern man can attempt to build with confidence a better world. Back of the issues of social justice, war and peace, the future destiny of Orient and Occident and all other such questions, there looms a deeper quest which man cannot stifle and for which he must find some answer. Still there is life with its strange pulsations, its hopes and dreams and ancient hurts. Still above and beyond us there is the endlessly curving arch of the infinite immensity whose frail creatures we are. . . . Still there is the question life continues to ask concerning itself: "What Is It All About?"

Nothing ever has answered that question satisfactorily except religious faith in truth which has come to man from a Wisdom that is above and beyond himself. Unless we Christians are convinced we have in our possession that which gives rational evidence of having come to man as a revelation from God our inherited faith will completely pass away. The reasonableness and importance of this statement will perhaps not at first be apparent to the average layman, but it is so important for him to see this, that we are justified in this closing

chapter in calling emphatic attention to it. If man has nothing higher than his own wisdom upon which he can depend in matters of religious faith, then man is doomed to agnosticism and ought honestly to admit it. Without discounting in the slightest all that science, philosophy, human knowledge and human experience have wrought out and may yet work out in the wisdom and insights of man, the fact yet remains and becomes more appallingly compelling with every fresh revelation of modern science of the mystery and immensity of the universe in which we live, that man is sunk in abysmal ignorance. Man's attempt to explain the universe or to explain himself is hopeless. It can never be anything more than endless guessing in the Dark. For man to delude himself into thinking he has grasped, through his own efforts and by his own unaided explanations, the meaning of the universe or of his own life, is both humorously absurd and pathetically tragic. The universe is too great for us. It is too big and we are too small. A vital religious faith must be founded not on explanations from man but on revelations from God.

It is exactly at this point that modern liberalism has been inclined to lose its head and come perilously near to betraying and destroying our Christian heritage of faith. It is only the shallowness of our modernity that would make faith in a supernatural revelation appear trivial and inconsequential. The greater the range and depth of our modern knowledge the more inevitable must be our honest agnosticism, if we limit our convictions to man's unaided ability to know the meaning and mystery of his own life and of the vast universe forever and impenetrably veiled from his sight.

Modern liberalism within our Protestant churches has been unconsciously guilty for years of a dangerous tendency toward the undermining of our inherited faith. Extreme fundamentalism is impossible. It is hopelessly obsolete. But liberalism in rebelling against fundamentalism has tended to thin out into a mere religion of vague good-will, lacking those

great basic assurances which alone can put dynamic redemptive power into our Christian convictions and objective commitments. I have every sympathy with liberalism's rebellion against extreme fundamentalism, but for years liberalism has been slowly drifting toward an agnostic humanism, little realizing how serious was the import and inevitable consequence of some of its tendencies.

Liberalism, fine in its basic intentions and right in its basic rebellions against extreme fundamentalism, will destroy our faith unless liberalism guard against its own extreme tendencies. Our beliefs are based upon far more than a brave but futile attempt, on the part of man, to frame some guess as to the meaning of the riddle of the Vast Unknown and Unknowable. Our religious faith stands or falls upon the firmness and intelligence with which we cling to our conviction that we have in our possession, in the Bible and in Christ, the Word of God to man, a revelation final and absolute in its infallible moral and spiritual truth! Of this conviction we are not ashamed, and we are capable of defending it on reasonable grounds. It is intellectually respectable. It does not shackle our minds. It liberates them and has within it the greatest possibilities we know for the complete emancipation of all human life. We shall attempt in the following pages to bring this issue into a yet sharper focus.

#### CREEDS

The Christian faith abides across the ages. The various creeds in which differing Christian groups and eras have sought to interpret this faith change with the changing epochs of time. The Christian faith has frequently rewritten its creeds in days that are gone. What it has found necessary to do in the past it finds necessary to do once more. We have sought for many years to evade this issue, thinking that by so doing we were avoiding bitter church quarrels and division.



We have thought by indefinitely postponing the rewriting of our creeds we were effectively disposing of some of the impossible medieval obsolescences of our creedal statements. But we have been doing nothing of the sort. We have simply added confusion to a very confused situation. We can never have a great Church unless that Church has a belief. If our inherited beliefs, as many of them are now stated, are impossible then we must know what beliefs are possible. Protestantism is a religion. All religions are based on faith. We must know what that faith is. We must have a clear creedal statement of it put in a manner the modern world can understand. This must be done not because our creeds as they now stand are false, but because they are confusing to the rank and file of our people who are woefully ignorant of and indifferent toward their contents.

Many persons are apparently unaware of the fact that the historic creeds of Protestantism are very broad-minded and comprehensive documents. To illustrate this point I shall be pardoned for referring to the official creed of my own denomination, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as it was adopted and has been amended, from time to time, by the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. To this creed our liberals are loyal though many of us are emphatic in our conviction that it ought to be rewritten.

To enter into a detailed discussion of the provisions of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* would be like undertaking a highly legalistic explanation of the provisions of the Constitution of the United States of America. This is manifestly impossible in a brief space. Such a treatment would involve lengthy and tedious writing.

There are many people who talk glibly about defending the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the United States who show plainly that they have never really studied it, perhaps never even taken the trouble to read it, and are uninformed as to the deepest convictions and motives of our

fathers who wrote the Constitution. The same thing is true regarding our historic creeds. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* is not the rigid cast-iron statement of dogmatic inflexibility which many uninformed persons seem to think it is. The writers of the American civil constitution deliberately provided for great flexibility in the interpretation of the meanings inherent within the document itself. So did the writers of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

Too great emphasis cannot be placed on this historic fact. When American Presbyterianism adopted the *Westminster Confession of Faith* it committed itself to a creed whose dominant spirit is catholic and liberal and not sternly authoritarian and dogmatic. In a detailed study of the *Westminster Confession*, citing specific paragraphs and chapters of the document itself, Dr. William Pierson Merrill, Minister of the Brick Presbyterian Church of New York City, clearly explained this well known fact in a sermon-pamphlet published in 1923 entitled, *The Comprehensive Creed of Presbyterians*. Anyone questioning the loyalty of liberals to our doctrinal standards, not only their right but their duty to remain within our denomination to uphold its historic catholic liberality, should secure a copy of this strong, irenic, scholarly pamphlet. I wish space permitted quoting from it at length, if not in its entirety. Its theme has never been better treated in so concise a manner.

Doctor Merrill developed this same thesis in a yet fuller and more convincing manner in his book, *Liberal Christianity* (published by The Macmillan Company), two years after his sermon-pamphlet appeared, and at a time (1925) when our Church was being disturbed by doctrinal controversy and was in great need of being reminded of the catholicity of its creed. In 1923, after a stormy session of our national General Assembly, held in Indianapolis, 1,293 of the leading ministers of our denomination signed an historic document known as the "Auburn Affirmation" in which the right of liberalism to hold its views within the inclusive provisions of our doctrinal stand-

ards was clearly implied. During this period the General Assembly appointed a Special Commission (in 1925), composed of fifteen members, "to study the present spiritual condition of our Church and the causes making for unrest, and to report to the next General Assembly, to the end that the purity, peace, unity and progress of the Church may be assured." This Special Commission, composed of both conservatives and liberals, was continued at its task for two years. Its reports may be found in the official published *Minutes of the General Assembly of 1926 and 1927*. While it was rightly careful not to take sides with any partisan element within the Church, conservative or liberal, it yet clearly upheld the inclusive as opposed to the exclusive interpretation of the Church's historic attitude of mind. None but a very small though at times quite vocal minority has questioned since then the justice and truth of the Special Commission's report. It sustained the historic position of our Church and saved it from schism by guarding that unity within diversity to which our fathers, in their great wisdom, long ago committed us. Though neither the Auburn Affirmation nor the General Assembly's Special Commission dealt directly with theology, though both dealt principally with Constitutional questions, yet the inclusive theology of both was emphatically implied and affirmed.

This extended reference to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., has been made solely for purposes of illustration. What is true of it is true of practically all the historic creeds of Protestantism. No informed person should charge liberal Christian leaders, of any of our evangelical groups, with disloyalty to the fundamental faith of our Protestant fathers. The position of liberalism is most emphatically sanctioned by the creeds to which we have sworn allegiance. When we insist that these creeds need simplification, that they should be rewritten that the original religion of Jesus may be more clearly stated in terms more intelligible to our times, we are seeking not to destroy but to

strengthen the creedal expression of the revealed truth of God which we have pledged ourselves to defend.

That the essential point involved here may be further clarified we shall contrast certain differing interpretations of our inherited Christian faith. Extreme fundamentalism, in all our Protestant churches, interprets our creeds as follows :

God created a man and a woman, Adam and Eve, our first parents, who were placed to live in a veritable paradise, the Garden of Eden. On account of a sin of disobedience, this first man and woman upon the earth were driven from the Garden of Eden and all their descendants, to the remotest generations, were under the wrath and curse of God who sentenced all humanity to suffer the torments of an everlasting hell. To save humanity from the doom of hell God sent His Son into the world. Jesus entered into a legalistic arrangement with God, through which He offered up Himself as a blood sacrifice to God for the sin of man in order to save man from suffering the torments of damnation in an everlasting hell. If man will so believe man is saved. If man will not so believe he will suffer forever in hell. The great task of the Church is to persuade men so to believe and thus be saved from the horrors of an eternal punishment. The Bible is infallible in its every literal word. Christ is coming again miraculously "to put all enemies under His feet" and to set up His rule and reign of righteousness upon the earth which will miraculously become a new heaven and a new earth. Thus extreme fundamentalism interprets our historic creeds, states its basic framework of thought embracing its belief concerning creation, the fall of man, the necessity for the mission of Christ upon the earth, the redemptive efficacy and legalistic saving power of the blood of Christ shed upon the Cross and also its belief concerning the future of man in a heaven or a hell, the end of the world and much else which it is not here necessary to discuss.

In this brief statement of one manner of interpreting our inherited Protestant creeds we have omitted many doctrines

dealing with the Trinity, justification, adoption, sanctification, election, predestination, free grace, baptism, sacraments and much else which it is not necessary to discuss in this connection. This extreme interpretation is expressed in thought which is neither intelligible nor convincing to our times. It does not represent the faith of the majority of our fundamentalists whose views are far more liberal than the foregoing extreme statement indicates. Nor does it embrace the only interpretation of Christian truth emphatically stated in our historic doctrinal standards. In these same great creeds, which we have inherited from the past, liberals find full warrant for their theological convictions. Our creeds from their inception purposely provided for differing interpretations, and no theological party, within the Church, has the right to force its position upon others who hold divergent views. Extreme liberalism can be quite as intolerant as extreme fundamentalism. This latter minority element, in all our Protestant churches, should be treated with sympathetic understanding and patient kindness. A united Protestant Church must guarantee freedom of conscience and liberty of expression to extreme fundamentalism to believe and to teach its doctrines if it so desires. This situation will in time take care of itself. Time and light will effectively dispose of extreme fundamentalism if this minority Protestant element is dealt with in terms of Christian magnanimity.

Stress is again placed upon the insistence that nine-tenths of our fundamentalists and liberals will have no difficulty in agreeing on a revised basic statement of faith when once we bring this whole issue out into the open and freely and frankly discuss it in a spirit of Christian candor and love. Residues of extreme and antiquated theology are still to be found in a great deal of Protestant thought and this is responsible—though many seem not to be aware of it—for much of the queerness, unreality and ineffectiveness of some phases of Protestant preaching and effort.

As a reaction against extreme fundamentalism there is the very pronounced modern tendency toward humanism whose position will be more clearly defined as we proceed. Humanism has not yet captured our churches. It represents a modern movement on the outside of our institutions, but it is attracting many of our people who in rebelling against extreme fundamentalism are inclined to abandon completely the faith of our fathers. It is important, therefore, that we should understand their position.

Humanism passes through several inevitable stages. At first it is generally theistic. It retains belief in God even though it cuts itself loose from faith in any kind of supernatural revelation from God to man. Humanism does not remain theistic for very long. Its next logical and inevitable step is a commitment of itself to agnosticism. This is not theory but fact. In the *Humanist Manifesto* quoted in the prologue to this volume, the names of several clergymen appear. They frankly declare they have no faith in God. This is not cited in criticism of these men but merely to emphasize an impressively significant fact, that humanism tends inevitably to declare itself to be agnostic. There are two other steps which follow.

The humanist who gives up his faith in God is led, before he knows it, to give up his faith in something else with which everyone of us has to live very intimately every day. Loss of faith in God involves inevitably loss of faith in life also. Without faith in God faith in life is irrational and logically impossible. I know how absurd that statement will appear to many but let us explore further the logic of its thought.

If there is no purpose *back of* life there is no meaning *in* life. The moment we use such words as "meaning" and "purpose," in connection with the living of our human life, we are confronted with the word *ought*. We are instinctively thinking in terms of what human life *ought* to do and be. But it is irrational to say what life *ought* to do unless we have a

clear conviction of what life *is*. No engineer would expect an automobile or a radio to do what an airplane does. What an engineer thinks an automobile *ought* to do depends on what he thinks an automobile *is*. The same common sense applies to one's estimation and expectancy of our human life. If it *is* an insignificant accident and utterly negligible incident in the cosmic process, if it is alive on a planet for which it was never intended in a universe which cares nothing about it—if human life *is* a "sow's ear" it is illogical and senseless to say it *ought* to be a "silk purse."

Irreligion means essentially the denial of purpose within the cosmic process, which is but another way of putting what is meant by a denial of the existence of God. Now, the moment one denies purpose within the cosmos one is confronted with the dilemma of what to think our human life *is* and what, therefore, we *ought* to try to do with it. Religion, which is based on faith in God, says our human life is alive on this planet because God created it and placed it here for a magnificent moral and spiritual purpose. Irreligion, denying faith in God, can do no more than recite the senseless jingle that, "we are here because we are here because we are here—because we are here," and let it go at that. Which is not a very brilliant, edifying or uplifting estimate of the reason for our existence. Faith in God invests human life with a tremendous sense of its own dignity and sacredness. Religious faith in God steps inside a man's personality and says to him, "Your life is sacred, a trust committed into your hands by the Eternal and Holy God and, therefore, you must not waste it or betray in any manner the highest and best of which you are capable." Irreligion, denying faith in God, steps inside a man's personality and says to him, "Your life is nothing, that came from nothing and means nothing." The agnostic humanist does not at first see this inevitable logical implication of his thinking. Loss of faith in life affects everyman right down upon the level where we daily live our lives. The very moment

one begins to "humanize religious faith" and to do a thoroughgoing and honest job of it, one is headed inevitably toward the destruction of faith not only in God but in life also. But a third step follows.

The seriousness of the ultimate consequence of this loss of faith in life is not at first apparent. It tends inevitably toward a breakdown in morality which is the third and final step involved in strictly humanistic thought. No one would dream of charging present-day humanism with immorality, but the ultimate tendency of the movement is bound to be in that direction. Humanism today is thoroughly moral but it is running along in its moral motivations upon its unacknowledged borrowings from the older forms of religious faith. Humanism's inherited influence of Christian morality it will tend more and more to lose as the generations of humanists are removed further and further from the Christian faith of their forefathers. After several generations have been produced whose faith concerning life is that it came from nothing and is moving toward nothing, a breakdown in moral sanctions is bound to occur. An attitude of mind is inevitable which will tend more and more to say to itself, why bother about—nothing. In writing this one does not write theoretically. The historic facts support the assertion that this is what has always happened to religious movements in the past which cut themselves loose from faith in a supernatural revelation and committed themselves to a thoroughgoing humanism. The movement takes three logically inevitable steps: first, loss of faith in God, second, loss of faith in life, and, third, loss of morality. These three steps do not occur at once. It generally takes several generations or even centuries for this sequence to work itself out in this way, but, this is the tendency such movements have always followed in the past, and, it may be confidently predicted, they will follow in the future.

The creed of extreme humanism, stated in quite unconventional terms, is as follows:



We are utterly in the dark so far as any reliance on or belief in any power or meaning outside of our own human selves is concerned. All we know or ever can know is that we are here, human beings living our life upon the earth. We waste our time in any attempts to search out the meaning lying back of the universe or imminent within it. God is unknown and unknowable. God is a delusion, the result of our own imagination in which our wishful thinking unconsciously projects our own little human image against the sky, and that projection of our own image across the immensity of infinite space we are deluded and stupid enough to call—God. We must outgrow these childish religious beliefs which belong to primitive periods of our race's intellectual immaturity. We must be brave about the wild place in which we live. We must accept the universe as it is and make the best of it. Of course, there is heart-break and horror in our human existence but there is also joy. We must cease being so childish as to depend on a God. We must be grown-up men and women and depend solely on ourselves. Instead of bothering about the universe whose meaning we can never grasp, or about God who may or very likely may not be, let us learn what we can learn and do the best we can with ourselves and for others here upon the good earth.

All of this sounds rather sensible, indeed rather inevitable for man's final belief concerning what he really is up against, and may and may not do with his world and with himself. But humanism is based upon an enormous fallacy. It is not new. It is very old. Under one name or another it has been tried time and again in both ancient and modern times. An impartial reading of human history will substantiate the statement that agnostic humanism has been fatal alike to man's happiness and progress. Humanism can never successfully get away from the haunting questions which life persistently asks of itself: What is it all about? What is man? Is he just an animal who talks, knows how to sing, write poetry and enjoy music, or—is man a something-else? These questions will not

down and agnostic humanism has never been able to give them a satisfactory answer.

Humanism may be ever so bravely or nonchalantly stated and held, but the historical fact of actual human experience with it across many ages is, that always it leaves man in the lurch when he most needs real help. It deludes and betrays him. In a real crisis it leaves him with an aching void at the center of his being which brings frustration and defeat upon his life. He espouses humanism, thinking it will liberate his life; instead it enslaves him. Humanism does not meet life's stern tests. At the very moment when man most needs to be sustained by its philosophy it leaves him with a very empty bag to hold. Or, to change the figure of speech, it leaves him like a swimmer who comes to feel after a while that the vast body of water in which he is swimming is too much for him, that his powers to cope with it and to keep his head above water are becoming exhausted. In the grip of such a feeling man always does one of two things. He resigns himself to the inevitable and quits swimming with any courageously persistent efforts of his own. He allows himself to sink lower and lower into a philosophy of hedonism or grim despair. He surrenders to a final conviction of "what's the use?" When he does that the great waters close in over him and darkness overwhelms him. And he is lost. . . .

But he does not always do that. There is an instinct within him which, if allowed to have free play, causes him to do something else, to turn to a second alternative. Feeling himself sinking and unable by his own efforts to keep his head longer above water he instinctively reaches out for *the Unseen Hand*. There is a mysterious something within him which has always made it possible for him to know there is a Power and Life above and beyond his own powers and his own life. Whenever man has reached expectantly for the Unseen Hand something amazing and tremendous has always happened to him. The Unseen Hand takes a mighty hold of man's hand and bears him up

and leads him along. History is full of such incidents. Some psychologists have tried to explain away this phenomenon so deeply authenticated in human experience. They will never succeed in explaining it away until they have succeeded in explaining life away. It belongs at the very heart of reality as human life is capable of knowing reality in terms that expand and exalt our powers.

Historical research yields the most interesting data concerning man's past experiences with humanism. The facts are—out of historic periods of the greatest humanistic disillusionment, the greatest ages of faith and trust in God have come. Christianity was born into the world in just such an age! Humanism has never been the final, sustaining answer to man's insatiable quest for life's meaning and value. It has no exalting word to speak to man as to who he is and may yet become. It is devoid of genuinely emancipating power. The redemptive touch which brings ennobling liberation to the human spirit is alien to its creedal commitment. Humanism which is becoming quite popular today will be dead tomorrow. Christianity has attended its funeral frequently in the past and will do so on many occasions in the future. Life demands and will receive a deeper and more satisfying answer to its most significant and persistent questions than humanism has ever been able to give.

The Protestant Christian Church is severely handicapped in resisting the inroads of agnostic humanism because of the many antiquated elements of medieval obsolescence that still cling to our faith. It is exactly at these vestiges of medievalism that modern humanism points, and frequently appealing to the narrow-minded bigotries and prejudices of sophisticated modernity, she wins many of her new and enthusiastic converts. Not until our ancient Christian faith strips itself of these useless doctrinal impedimenta, cast in the modes of thinking of past ages, will we ever be in a position to deal vigorously with

humanism and save our oncoming generations from surrendering to it.

Humanism has no magnificent power in it. It will never bring that exalting emancipation to our human life which it so insistently claims it has the power to do. But these things we are helpless in pointing out with convincing force as long as we continue to allow so many medieval doctrinal obsolescences to cling to us and to become identified with us in the thinking and prejudices of millions of modern-minded people.

It is this situation which makes imperative the rewriting of our Protestant creeds. If the only issue involved were that of fundamentalism and liberalism getting along amicably with each other there would be no necessity for rewriting our creeds. As these ancient statements of faith now stand they are broad enough to include the differing convictions of both fundamentalists and liberals who for years have co-operated heartily with each other in all our Protestant groups. But a greater and far different issue faces us. Millions of thoughtful people are being alienated from us because the great convictions of our religion are not clearly put in a creedal profession of faith stated in terms intelligible to the general body of people of our day. We are in danger of surrendering our inherited faith to vagueness or to gross misunderstanding. As our official creeds now stand none but a trained expert in such matters can understand what they mean.

No sensible minister, fundamentalist or liberal, confronted by lay persons troubled with honest doubts, would recommend that they study our creeds. And yet Protestantism is supposed to be an expression of Christian faith in plain terms understandable by the lay mind. We have never taken the position that our faith deals with obscure, inexplicable "mysteries" which only a specially initiated priesthood is capable of comprehending. The historic position of Protestantism is quite the opposite. From the very beginning our fathers insisted that both the Bible and its creedal interpretation be placed in

the hands of all our people for their clear understanding. The Special Commission of the Presbyterian General Assembly, to which reference has already been made, stated in its report of 1927, "The Christian religion has always had to fight for its life, and each age has been compelled to fashion its own arguments and create its own defense. There is immediate need for a fresh and a compelling statement of the reasons for our faith. The Church is waiting for it, and the youth of our time are hungry to receive it. The Church must be set for the defense of the everlasting Gospel and must speak to the age in its own language."\* Our official creed as it now stands certainly does not meet this imperative demand. It needs to be rewritten not because it is false but because it fails to speak to our age in language it understands.

We have been largely engaged in the preceding pages in contrasting two very different creeds: first, that of extreme fundamentalism and, second, that of extreme humanism. But there is what might also be termed, a "third creed" which is neither extreme fundamentalism nor extreme modernism. It is, as we have repeatedly emphasized, already embraced in the broadly inclusive provisions of our historic Protestant creeds. But it needs to be more clearly stated in an officially revised statement of our convictions.

This "third creed" still clings to the great fundamentals of our inherited Christian faith. It is still founded upon the Word of God. That Word we find in the Bible and in Christ. It is *the Word that God is; that God is good; that God is just; that God is righteous; that God is love, and that He demands goodness, righteousness, justice and love among men!*

This is the Word of God to man and there is none other. All other words are but broken accents or amplifying interpretations of this Eternal Word which is the same yesterday, today and forever.

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\*Pp. 83-84 *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., 1927.*

In Christ, we Christians believe, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. To us He is *the* Son of Man and *the* Uniquely Divine Son of God. In His life and character we see what the character of God is like and the character of man should strive to become like. We believe man ignores at his peril Christ's original Gospel that man must surrender his life absolutely into the hands of God and must dedicate his life to the complete emancipation of his fellows. We still believe in the redemptive power of the Cross with its illuminating revelation of what the love of God is like and the love of man for his fellows ought to be like. We still believe in prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. We still believe the Life that is above and beyond all life can live in the life of living men, lifting us up from what we are toward what we ought to be. We still believe in the divine origin and immortal destiny of man. We still believe man is lost and needs to be saved. We are still committed to the original Gospel of Christ which had to do with social as well as individual redemption. In this Gospel we place our hope for the redemption of the world from the curse of war and social injustice and any and every other thing that degrades, enslaves, betrays and defeats our human life.

The fundamental convictions of our faith upon which Protestant Christianity can unite in a rewritten creedal statement will preserve our great heritage from the past and move us toward a really Christian redemptive solution of the problems of the present. This third creed our generation must write. It will place its greatest emphasis upon the things Christ Himself emphasized. This is an issue we cannot evade and dare no longer to ignore. This third creed cannot be written by one man. It must be the result of the patient working together of many Christian minds representing many differing viewpoints. To this third, brief and simply phrased, rewritten creed the future of Protestant Christianity belongs. It will not be a statement of faith of "modernism." The men most

capable of writing it are not "modernists." They are "ancientists" interested solely in recalling the Christian Church to that ancient religion of Jesus as contrasted with the religion which grew up around and about Jesus centuries after He left the earth. To these men the theology of pagan Latin Imperialism with its masochistic aberrations of Augustine of the fifth century, the harsh and unethical legalism of Anselm of the eleventh century, and the cruel logic of Calvin of the sixteenth century represent elements that are too "modern" in the creeds of Christendom. Christianity should have done with all such "modernism" and go back to the ancient truth revealed in Christ and clearly stated in our Holy Bible.

One thinks of scores of men, nationally known, in all our Protestant groups fully capable of working together in rewriting a creedal statement upon which Protestantism could unite. These men wear different labels. Some of them call themselves, or are called by others, "conservatives," "fundamentalists," "liberals" or "modernists." But at heart they are all loyal disciples of Christ and they would find it an easy and thrilling task to bring their minds into agreement in a rewritten statement of our common Christian faith which would command the respect and win the assent of nine-tenths of our Protestant people. Such a group of Protestant leaders should be set at once to this imperative task!

#### THE MARCH OF EVENTS

Like clouds driven swiftly before the wind certain outstanding events have been marching for decades across our times. The significance of some of these events we ought more clearly to understand. The Christian Church must be brought to realize what she appears to be like in the eyes of rapidly increasing numbers of thoughtful people. Some of the finest intellectual life of our day has been alienated from us. Some of the most significant movements for human emancipation

are to be found outside our institutions. There are many sincere and thoughtful people, with a genuine moral passion for the building of a better world, who have long since waved us aside and said we are hopeless. They have declared it is useless to expect any real light or leadership from us as the modern world grapples with its greatest practical issues. The disturbing fact we of the Christian Church must be made to see is not that the world condemns us but that it increasingly ignores us. It is easy for us to delude ourselves on this point—and we are continuously succumbing to the temptation to do so—by quoting statistics relative to the size of our memberships, annual budgets, value of properties and endowments. But these are not the things, in spite of their numerical statistical impressiveness, which are actually shaping the future destiny of the modern world.

I believe, in spite of all her faults, there is more genuine goodness, social intelligence and moral passion inside the Christian Church than there is in any movement outside the Christian Church. But it is foolish and dangerous to delude ourselves. In the eyes of increasing numbers of thoughtful people, the world, outside our churches, *appears* to have long since dismissed and ignored us and gone marching on.

How has this happened? There are many causes. We shall emphasize one. There is a dangerous tendency, within organized Christianity, toward an adamant fixity of stereotyped belief and moral laxity and cowardice. This tendency grows unconsciously upon all religious groups and they must be forever on their guard against its paralyzing influence. This tendency has had much to do with causing the Christian Church to appear in the eyes of too many people to be a movement hopelessly out of touch with the great moral issues of the modern world.

The Church for some years has been too busy "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel."\*

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\*Words of Christ reported in Matthew 23:24 (Revised Version).



side the Christian Church first came to an open clash with our inherited creedal faith in the 1880's. Heresy trials followed rapidly. A few examples will suffice.

In 1890 Dr. Charles A. Briggs, a Presbyterian clergyman, delivered his inaugural address as the professor-elect of the Chair of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary (New York). In that address he made statements for which he was indicted and tried for heresy and was condemned by the General Assembly. He was found guilty of the following "serious errors," which are quoted from the record; "teaching that errors may have existed in the original text of the Holy Scripture"; "that the great body of Messianic prediction has not been and cannot be fulfilled"; "that Moses did not write the Pentateuch"; "that Isaiah is not the author of half the book which bears his name"; and "that the processes of redemption extend to the world to come." Other heresy trials followed and in this same period Professor Henry Preserved Smith was condemned by the Church Courts for holding much the same heretical views.

In the winter of 1904-05 the Reverend Algernon Sidney Crapsey, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, delivered a series of sermons in which he denied belief in the Virgin Birth of Christ. He also spoke plainly on matters which touched lightly upon religion and social justice. He said, "As for you, O ye unprivileged classes, who have been put off with words about Trinities and entities and incarnations and personalities, the name and terminology of the Greek dialectic, and have been told that to say these things is true religion—know that true religion and undefiled before God and the Father is to visit the widow and the orphan in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world." For this plain speaking Doctor Crapsey was cited for trial April 11, 1906, before the Ecclesiastical Court of the Diocese. The court found these views heretical and he was "suspended from exercising the functions of a minister of this Church until such

time as he shall satisfy the Ecclesiastical Authority of this diocese that his beliefs and teachings conform to the doctrines of the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds as the Church has received the same." "The President [of the Court which tried and condemned Crapsey] ordered that 'as these proceedings began with Holy Communion, they should close with the Benediction.' "\*

Crapsey found himself unable in good conscience to satisfy the ecclesiastical authority of his diocese as to the soundness of his Christian faith, and so on November 26, 1906, he resigned from the ministry. Dr. Andrew D. White—one of the founders and for long the President of Cornell University, to which he made a personal gift of nearly a half million dollars—and the author of the *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology* published in 1898, said, "the disregard of the pleas of Crapsey and his counsel would inflict a blow upon the Protestant Episcopal Church from which it probably would never recover." One of the leading newspapers of New York City printed a large cartoon at the time of Crapsey's resignation. The cartoon pictured the half-opened door of a church. Inside the church there was semi-darkness covering a congregation of dark faces. In the foreground of the picture the clergyman was depicted leaving the church. With his face uplifted he was putting off his ecclesiastical robes. Underneath the cartoon were these words, "Out and into the Light!" True or not, it was a terrible indictment not only of the Protestant Episcopal Church but of all Protestant Churches—the expression of a conviction, true or not, which was beginning to be widely held, that there was more light outside our churches than inside.

That happened in 1906. During previous and subsequent years modern science was accepted and taught in all our leading institutions of higher learning. The modern mind, with its

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\*For a fuller account of this period in the life of American Protestantism, see *Religion in Our Times*, by Dr. Gaius Glenn Atkins, published by Round Table Press, to whom I am indebted for much of this information covering this particular period. Quoted by permission.

pronounced tendency toward skepticism and cynicism, continued to take its dominant shape and to express itself in the literature, life and secular thought of the modern world. Twenty years later the Protestant Christian Church was wracked and wrenched from one end of America to the other by the controversy—led by good but mistaken men—against the theory of evolution because it was thought to be a theory regarding creation which was “contrary to the teachings of the Word of God.” Religious pressure was brought to bear upon state legislatures, some of which were persuaded to pass laws prohibiting the teaching of the theory of evolution in state-supported schools. Crapsey’s cartoon, “Out and into the Light,” appeared in 1906. The controversy within our Protestant churches concerning the theory of evolution, its falsity and danger because it was “contrary to the teachings of the Word of God,” brings us well up into the middle of the 1920’s.

In the meantime, between 1906 and the late 1920’s, the most horrible calamity of history broke over our civilization in the World War which was led and fought by “Christian” nations. During this same period the Christian Church was crushed in Russia and atheistic Communism became, and has since remained, the dominant power in the life of one hundred and sixty-five million people from whom its influence has passed across the Orient and the Occident. The vindictive Peace of Versailles was signed, an instrument of international stupidity and revenge sowing the seeds of inevitable future strife. Powerful dictatorships with their denial of human freedom have gripped large areas of Western civilization making more acute the international tension of our day. The Orient, astir with new impulses, has added another threatening element to the insecurity of our world. And of late the greatest depression in history has paralyzed the economic processes of the earth for over five years, and no man knows what may yet be ahead of us. The forces of this catastrophe have been gathering with amazing rapidity across the past thirty years. Its inevitable

coming was prophesied by a relatively few far-seeing Christian and non-Christian men who were lone voices crying in the wilderness of boom-times prosperity and economic injustice. The world revolution, long predicted, is now upon us. Vast forces are on the march everywhere, leading us no man knows exactly where. All of this has happened in the real world in which we live during the span of years in which the Christian Church seriously engaged herself over such things as the aforementioned heresy trials and the theory of evolution.

This, of course, is by no means a complete or truthful picture of all that the Christian Church was doing across these years in exerting a great moral and spiritually redemptive influence on vast areas of the world. But it is a sufficient part of the picture of some of the things which at times seemed to be the most serious concern of the Christian Church, to cause us all to pause a bit and look with a more penitently critical scrutiny at some issues we have thought were very important while things were happening all around us to whose world-wide and century-spanning importance we were attaching too small a significance. During this period—after making due allowance for all that our Christian greatness and goodness accomplished, which none needs to deny and for which all should be profoundly grateful—is it or is not a fact that we strained out a good many gnats and swallowed a good many camels?

The judgments of Time are the judgments of God. Whether we agree with it or not, there is a wide-spread feeling that the modern world long ago dismissed us as being impossibly medieval—little people concerned only over little things—and went marching on! It is so the Christian Church appears in the eyes of many. This critical attitude takes a quite distorted view which needs to be balanced and corrected by a larger judgment evoked by the very pertinent question: Toward just what has the modern world marched after it so glibly dismissed us?

The facts are: Toward World War, revolution, economic collapse and a wide-spread feeling of baffling disillusionment,

cynicism, frustration and futility! Modern science and the modern secular liberal spirit, with their pronounced tendency to ignore the place and function of religious faith, have not brought to modern man or to his social order that emancipation which was so jauntily declared, only a few years ago, to be within our grasp. The secular radicalism of sophisticated modernity cannot turn upon the ancient Christian Church and denounce her for her failures and "point with pride" to the stability or brilliancy of modernity's achievements. The truth is, if we look back across the last fifty years, none of us inside or outside the Christian Church has a right to condemn the other. Our leadership, secular and religious, has failed our modern world all along the line. The world outside the churches has too largely ignored the place and power of religious faith. On the other hand the Church has failed to keep pace with the progress of modern knowledge and to adjust its thinking to it. The Church has also failed to address its full resources toward a Christian solution of vast moral issues which have been rapidly taking shape across many decades. It is because of this double failure, secular and religious, that our modern world is in its present tense situation. Religion has been for too long too much divorced from real life. It has failed to deal in a tremendously redemptive way with the real problems of our real world. Secular modernity which promised to emancipate us has but further enslaved us. Everywhere we see the tragic results which occur when religion too largely ignores real life and real life ignores religion.

The phrasing of Kipling's *Recessional* speaks with unique impressiveness to our time. "Lord God of hosts be with us yet lest we forget. . . ."

. . . Standing in the dim twilight of the past there are monumental memorials of facts we should not forget. . . . Out in Arabia there are ruins of what was once a resplendent civilization. In the mountains of the desert one travels on horseback,

attended by armed soldiers. Riding through a long and deeply shadowed stretch of narrow gorge one enters the ancient city of Petra. It is "the rose-red city half as old as time." The impressive façades of its buildings are carved from the towering cliffs which encircle the city with a great wall no ancient army was ever able to batter down. The city has been completely abandoned for centuries. For fourteen hundred years its existence was lost to Western knowledge. The ruins of its temples and tombs bespeak as impressive and as beautiful an architecture as anything the ancient or the modern world boasts. I have visited this place and lived for a time in one of its abandoned temples and watched at night the shadows, cast by our campfire, playing weirdly across tombs and temples. Over the whole scene an uncanny silence broods and the pale stars keep watch. A world can end. I have seen a world that ended.

To the north of Petra and once a part of the same mighty Graeco-Roman civilization, there are the ruins of the long abandoned city of Jerash. For over a thousand years it has belonged to the wilderness and been the home of tumbled desolation. Few travelers ever visit it. It is too far off the beaten track. It lies in a fertile plain bordered by distant mountains, the whole area to this day very sparsely inhabited though capable of supporting a large population. Jerash is believed by many archeologists to have been a city which once boasted a population equal to some of our larger modern cities. One walks its streets, enters its temples, sits in its amphitheater and listens for sounds that never come. Once racial vigor, intellectual genius, wealth and youth and beauty lived in this place. Here life once knew its strange pulsations, its quickening pleasures of the flesh; once experienced its noble thoughts, its hurts and its dreams. Now, there is not a sound save the stirring of the wind; not a movement save the play of lights and shadows as night follows day and day follows night in a never-ending sequence. It is all as quiet and as motionless as death. I have

visited this place and come under the spell of its haunting appeal, and have felt the pain and pathos of the lot of man upon the earth. His hopes and dreams have so frequently met with disaster. . . .

Ours is a very gay, sun-flooded world whose shimmering light is mingled with deep shadows in which tragedy sometimes looms. It is a glad and thrilling world whose greatness issues from the vast alternatives of good and evil by which it is encompassed. Goodness wins splendid victories, but sometimes Evil overwhelms the life of man. Our modern faith in the inevitability of progress needs correction by a larger perspective which reminds us that retrogression is as much a fact as progression in the story of the life of man upon the earth. Civilizations do not die suddenly like men dropping dead of heart failure. They die slowly but—they do die. . . .

From these scenes of abandoned desolation of the past one returns to the world of our times and views with clearer eyes the trends of our day. The period through which we are passing marks as profound a change in civilization as that which accompanied the fall of the Empire of Rome. Our problems will not be solved by experimental expediencies or passing palliatives.

Dr. Oswald Spengler in his massive treatise, *The Decline of the West*, pictures a gloomy prospect. He writes that Western civilization's day is done and there is no hope. We, like other cultural and racial strains of the past, have had our little day upon the earth. Our sun is sinking and we cannot help it. There is nothing to do but what individual men do, when the youthful vigor of their flesh and spirit is spent and senility places its inevitable hand upon them. There is nothing for us to do but accept our age with quiet resignation and go down into oblivion with as much grace and dignity as possible. This has been the lot of all civilizations that have preceded ours. We should not complain over having to suffer this same fate which is common to all cultures. As individuals it may sadden us a

bit that we happened to be born at such a period. But, perhaps, the birth of a civilization is attended with more pain than its death. Mayhap as individuals we are more fortunate than we know to have been born in these sunset years of our declining racial strength. With all of which gloomy resignation we are in vehement disagreement. We do not believe Western civilization has even begun to discover the possible greatness of its life.

There are several different attitudes we may take toward the tensely critical situation in which the modern world finds itself. We may be indifferently apathetic. Perhaps apathy with its low intensity of sensitivity is a blessed state of existence. Mayhap it is a good thing to be blessed with a low order of intelligence, an unseeing and unfeeling mind. Is it not true that life goes on, always has and always will go on—and so, why such a bother about things? Retreating from these crowded cities in which the tempo of modern life is so tense, withdrawing into the healing and reassuring solitudes of nature, walking across open fields and through forests, we watch a leaf flutter down from a tree and light gracefully upon the broad bosom of a quietly moving stream. Do we not know leaves fluttered down quietly like that when America was in the throes of Civil War, and when the panic of 1893 gripped and for a time paralyzed our nation? These things we have always survived. Does not life go on—always has in the past and always will—why such a bother over things? This is a possible attitude we may take, the delightfully lowly sensitized attitude of apathetic indifference. This is a kind of peace of mind, enjoyed by the cattle upon a thousand hills.

There is a type of religious optimism which is identical in its effect with the result achieved by opiates or alcohol if taken in sufficient quantities. Religious optimism is under the temptation to degenerate into a mere escape mechanism—a refusal to face the unpleasant facts of reality. Lenin called this brand of Christianity the opiate of the people. Such a religion is not



genuine Christianity. Our faith, when it is true to its Founder, faces and never attempts to run away from the grim facts of reality. At the center of our religion there is a Cross which places the demand upon our conscience that we face reality and guard against a usage of our religion which makes of it an opiate producing within us the magic of soothing forgetfulness and drugged and dreamy sleep.

During the months in which I have been engaged in the writing of this volume I have crossed the Atlantic Ocean again and been more deeply impressed with the tense pitch of life "over there." Portentous movements are in the offing. Coming events, vague in their sinister, half-defined shape and form, are casting ominous shadows before them. We should not delude ourselves. Should a major crisis be precipitated tomorrow in Europe, and should the hysteria of fear get out of bounds and beyond the control of sanity, violence and hate will sweep across the world and America, in time, will be sucked into its vortex. A blind optimism is one of the most dangerous things thoughtful men can indulge in today. It is an attempt to run away from the unpleasant task of facing reality. We can best serve our day by a vigorously healthy-minded refusal to be captivated by an unfounded optimism.

There is yet another attitude one may take. One may become cynically pessimistic. It is true we do live in a world in which so much does seem to be the accidental result of blind chance and mechanistic uncertainty to those whose eyes have never been blessed and opened by the great visions of great religious faith. That is true, but we who believe in Christ's revelation of life and of God do not believe ours is a world of blind mechanism and chance uncertainty in which man lives his life and fights his battles—alone. We believe in God and we are not afraid. We are indeed thrilled over the tremendous possibilities inherent within the present world situation. Our era is not decadent. It is full of an enormous vitality of confused blundering determination which is ripe for some greatly construc-

tive guidance. This is one of the greatest moments of history. It is dangerous but thrilling. We do not believe man has even begun to realize the possible magnificence of his life.

We face a world in which the true genius of our faith ought to feel at home. Genuine Christianity is a virile faith. It withers, like a strong man whose life was framed for dangerous and daring deeds, if it be confined to soft-cushioned and stuffy interiors. Genuine Christianity is at home in a world of crisis. Our ancient faith came into its greatest power in such a period, one of those long curved arches of pause, confusion and change in which an old era dies and a new and greater epoch is born. Christianity ought to know that we are facing today one of those rare periods in history from which greatness can come because humanity is given a new turn making possible a greater human destiny.

We live in a world of law. Modern man has achieved amazing results in the realm of material science with his increasing technological knowledge and skills. Our modern era has been so fascinatingly absorbed in the clever manipulations of these forms of material power that we have tended to forget there are moral and spiritual laws with which life must also reckon. These moral and spiritual principles were woven by God into the mysterious stuff of life. This fact we unintentionally forget, ignore or openly defy, always at our peril. As we see it, that is exactly what has happened. We cannot break the fundamental moral laws of life, but we can be broken by them. This is not a statement of theory. It is a citation of fact which brings havoc upon us and darkness over us.

The objective material world we live in has not changed. Still we have with us the same rivers and mountains, the same sky and seas, the same fertile fields, the good earth yielding her increase, bringing forth her fruits in abundance to support and satisfy man's material needs. Still we have the eternal panorama of the seasons, the unending and never failing sequence of sunset, quiet night with its "train of stars and great gift of

sleep," dawn's glow and promise, day's great light, the soft patter of gently falling rain, the wind and cool mist upon our cheeks. The objective material world has not changed and there is nothing wrong with it. It is as it has always been. Things are as they are because we are what we are. It is man and not the objective world in which he lives who has brought trouble upon himself. Man's life needs to be touched redemptively at its center and dedicated to worthy ends of living. In the unfailing Reality and heroic commitments of our life for which Great Religion stands lies the hope of our modern world.

There are many volumes written today which give an accurate enough picture of the dangerous confusion in which the modern world finds itself, but too many of these volumes offer nothing constructive. They end their critical appraisal of our modern muddle with a note of hopelessness tinged frequently with a bit of unintentional cynicism. This very imperfect volume has sought to be definitely helpful.

In submitting the constructive proposals, which are given a full discussion in previous chapters, I am under no delusions as to the enormous practical difficulty of the task confronting us. And it would be impossible to over-emphasize the sincere humility with which this challenge is placed upon the conscience of modern Protestantism. The proposals outlined in this volume earnestly invite constructive criticism, change, correction. In the task confronting our Christian forces we need the tolerant pooling of many minds that we may come better to know the Mind and Will of God for our day.

The Protestant Christian Church has as great leaders as she has ever had. I think of the men of all denominations of my own city, state and nation and of numbers of them whom I have met abroad. The overwhelming majority of them, fundamentalist and liberal, are splendid men eager to do great things. We all believe the Christian Church must never rest until man is really and wholly redeemed. Our common conception of redemption implies the emancipation not merely of a

part of life but of all of life. Hand in hand with the moral and spiritual redemption of the individual must go the saving of man's life from the injustices of his social orders and from war's terrible devastations and any and everything else which brings horror, degradation and defeat upon him. We all believe that is exactly what Christian redemption means.

We Protestant Christians of all different shades of opinion must have done with timid evasions, with theological suspicions of each other or suppressions of frank and open discussions. We are brothers in Christ. We must clasp hands, unite our forces and set our faces forward. There are unlimited resources available if we will but dare to lead our generation in a really great Christian movement. Our generation cares nothing for theological peccadilloes and can never be challenged by appeals to small aims of petty piety.

Sherwood Eddy tells of the youth movement in Communistic Russia which is called "Pioneers." These young people are being educated and stringently disciplined to win the world for Communism which they believe, with a passion as sincere as that of any religious movement, is the only way in which humanity will ever find a complete and genuine emancipation. Mr. Eddy, describing his experiences in Russia, writes: "It is a moving scene to see fifty thousand Pioneers in a great stadium asked by the orator through the loud speaker: 'Pioneers, are you ready?' and to hear them answer in unison: 'We are ready!'"\* "It is a moving experience to hear fifty thousand youth shouting in perfect unison as I did in Moscow: 'We are changing the world! We are changing the world! We are changing the world!'"†

Youth is on the march in many places today. Whether one agrees with their objectives or not—it makes no difference—one cannot witness the parades of Communistic Youth on the march through the streets of Moscow, the Fascist Youth on the march throughout Italy, the Nazi Youth everywhere one

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\**Russia Today*, p. 112.

†*Ibid.*, p. 123.

travels in Germany today, on the march, singing and swinging along, and fail to be deeply stirred with emotion. One watches these moving demonstrations of youth; on their faces there is no bitterness, nor has life wrought cynicism or disillusionment upon their features. Their heads are uplifted. Their shoulders are broad. Their young supple bodies are strong. They smile and in their countenances there is no hate but only the expression of a mighty hope. They have found themselves alive in a chaotic time when an old world is dying and a new world is being born. They have sworn they will not do what past generations have done to them—accept things as they are and slip easily in and out of the world leaving old wrongs unrighted, old issues unsolved, the day of reckoning for ancient injustices postponed. They will have none of this. They believe their generation is the heir of the selfish iniquities and blind stupidities of the past and they are out with determination to break the power of these things over our human life. They are ready to die that the world they envision Tomorrow may become a fact. It is so—millions and millions strong—the Youth of Communism, Fascism and Naziism are marching. . . .

One can think of no previous period in history when a greater Christian Youth Movement was more needed or more possible than it is today. The world of tomorrow belongs to the younger generation. A movement of petty piety, committed to small platitudinous aims they will scorn. We will never command their enthusiastic allegiance unless we hold before them a challenge that is really big. We need nothing bigger than the challenge of Christ. There is nothing greater. . . .

The modern world is determined to build a new order of things. Will this new order be Christian or will it be something else? There is a tremendous determination for a more just and abundant life for the masses of humanity, which is making itself felt almost everywhere. Millions of men are being mightily moved to give themselves to the building of a new world-order. If these movements, worthy in their humanitarian aims, neglect—as some of them are doing—the place and importance

of religious faith in the life of man, they have ahead of them a period of profound disillusionment. There has never been a time when manifest Destiny pointed so unmistakably to the need and to the opportunity for a great religious leadership which will take this present world-wide mood and capture it and lead it with a genuinely Christian redemptive motivation.

The vast issues which beset the modern world are beyond our powers to bring to solution. No living brain or collective human will can compass these issues. They are too big for us and we are too small. Man needs a Power above and beyond himself to bring order and beauty out of the world's confusion. The Spirit of God can use a reformed and united Church as a channel for one of the greatest spiritual revivals of history. The world is ripe just now for such a revival. Out of such periods of crisis as we are now passing through, the great spiritual awakenings of the Christian faith in past history have come. Such a revival can come now.

We are living in one of those rare periods of Time from which greatness can emerge through the renewal of the human spirit by a more vital contact with the Great Spirit. Such moments, so pregnant with tremendous possibilities, are not often vouchsafed to man. A sweeping movement climbing upward toward the building of the world of our dreams—or—a spiral downward toward disaster, seems to lie just beyond the borders of our day. One cannot view with serenity the possibility of our failing to take advantage of this supreme moment in Time. Out of such periods magnificence comes. The Christian Church has an opportunity now, which, if she let slip through her hands, she may never have again. She must prove herself worthy of the leadership demanded of her. She will serve the modern world with Christian greatness or be repudiated by it. The Spirit of Christ will not leave the earth, but His Spirit will live in institutions other than our own.

















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